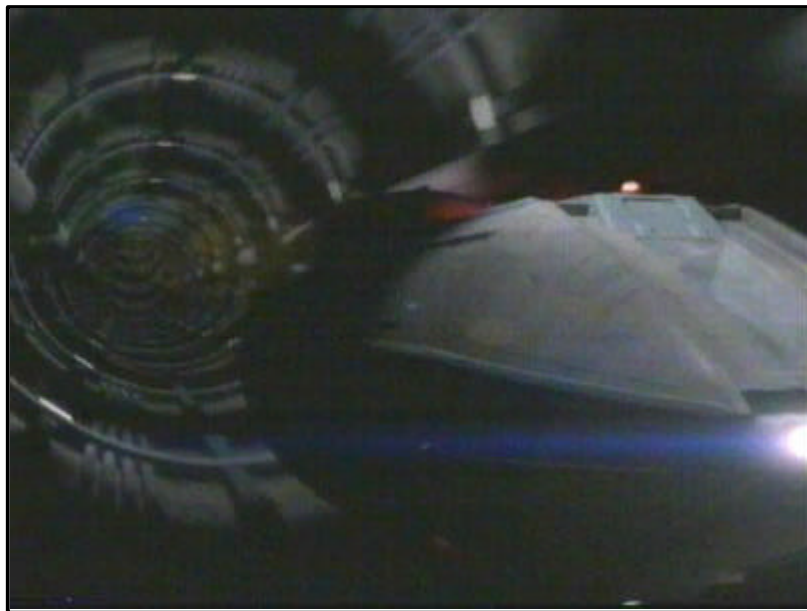


The Witches of Eriadne: Interlude Four E - Part 2: Angel's Ride

by [The Space Witches](#)



All is still and quiet during maintenance in the bullet car tube... or is it?

Chapter 1

August 2270

Angel looked down at the sleek lines of the motorcycle as it rested on its stand. Reaching out a hand, she stroked her fingers along the cool metal surface, and a smile spread across her lips. It was a magnificent piece of machinery, and it brought back memories of a time long ago, before the Vorlon had abducted her. Not that she had ever been for a ride on one, although she had always wanted to. No, it was something that was familiar to her, a symbol of the time she really came from. Even now, Angel was sometimes overwhelmed by the technology that made up her everyday life. It was a pleasure to see something that was 'old fashioned'.

Ever since she had learned that Gideon had bought a motorbike for her sister, Angel had been longing to see it. OK, she wanted more than to just see it, she wanted to go for a ride on it. Angel sighed and wondered why she was up here, sneaking a look at it. Demon and Gideon would have been more than happy to have her look at it, and no doubt knowing her interest in going for a ride, Demon would have suggested that Matthew should take her. That was just the problem, thought Angel ruefully. The thought of sitting behind the Captain, her arms wrapped around him, as they sped along on the powerful machine, was a little too... [Too what, Angel?] Angel shook her head. She wasn't here to look too closely at those feelings.

The sound of something clattering loudly in the distance made her jump out of her reverie. Looking in that direction, she realized that it was nothing to be concerned about. It was coming from where she

knew a maintenance crew was working on the bullet car lines. This whole section of the bullet car tube was shut down for a few hours, to allow maintenance to be carried out on the line. Angel was very grateful for that fact. Although she had learned it was safe where she was standing should a bullet car come past, she wasn't completely sure of that. Those bullet cars traveled extremely fast, and if you should happen to get too close to one when it was moving, well, it was bye bye birdie. Angel didn't relish the thought of being splattered by a bullet car.

No bullet cars being in operation had led to Angel venturing up there. It was the perfect opportunity for her to finally take a look at the bike. Angel looked down at it again, letting her hand reach out to touch the leather seat as she continued to admire it. She smiled with amusement at the color of the bike. Black, of course. Demon's color. Angel's smile spread further as a thought came to her. Touching her palm flat against the gas tank, she whispered a few words. Angel watched with amusement as the color of the motorcycle began to change, the black being replaced by a fire engine red. She stepped back to admire her handy work.

"Interesting choice of color."

Angel gave a startled cry at the deep voice behind her, and she spun around to find Gideon looking at her and at the bike, his eyebrow arched in amusement. With all the noise in the distance, she hadn't heard him approach, and she felt her heart racing faster at his unexpected appearance. Her face flushed with embarrassment at being caught red handed, literally and figuratively.

"Captain! I... I... uh..." Angel tripped over her tongue, unable to speak coherently for the moment. Her mouth gaped, as Gideon burst out laughing. He climbed up onto the ledge where she and the bike stood.

"Relax, Angel, you aren't in trouble," he said gently, as he walked past her to take a closer look at the bike and its new 'paint job'. After a few minutes, with a speechless Angel watching him, he turned with a grin on his face. "I can't even begin to think how you did this." His voice was filled with amazement.

Finally, Angel found her voice and said softly, "Magic." She paused, then she walked back to the bike and placed her palm on it, quickly repeating the spell she had used, and changed the color back to its original black.

"Hey! Don't do that, I liked it red," Gideon spoke abruptly, causing Angel to let out a startled yelp. She looked at him in wide-eyed surprise. Gideon grinned at her. "I'll deny it if you ever tell Deborah I said this, but I get a little tired of black all the time. On something built for speed, a bright color just seems more appropriate." Gideon paused to smile at her in encouragement, as he waved a hand at the bike before continuing, "Go on, please, Angel. Work your magic and change it back."

Angel let out a laugh, and nodding her head in agreement, she once again placed her hand on the gas tank. Before she cast the spell again she hesitated, as the mischief-maker in her took over. Grinning inwardly, she said the spell.

"Good God!"

She turned, barely managing to keep a straight face, as Gideon looked at the color of the bike, his eyes wide with shock. Faking a frown, she asked him with mock innocence. "What's wrong, Captain? Isn't it bright enough?"

For a moment, Gideon was speechless. He had never seen a color THAT bright before. It actually hurt his eyes to look at it. Instead of changing the bike back to the wonderful fire engine red, Angel had changed it to the most ultra shocking, brightest, most god-awful pink he had ever had the misfortune of laying his eyes on. Even worse were the fluorescent yellow polka dots. He gave a frown of disgust and looked back at Angel.

"When I said bright, Angel, I meant back to the red, not...not that!" Gideon's voice actually cracked on the last word, and that was enough to break Angel into a fit of laughter.

Gideon quickly realized that she was playing with him, and he growled at her. "Very funny. Now be a good girl and change it back to red, before it makes my eyes bleed!" As he finished his words, he was already laughing and watching with relief as Angel wordlessly turned the bike back to red.

"Better now, Captain?" Asked Angel, her voice thick with laughter.

Gideon scowled at her for a moment, then broke into a grin, shaking a finger at her. "For that, *you* get to be the one to tell Deborah why the color of her bike has changed."

Angel snorted and shook her head vigorously. "Oh no, not a chance in hell, Captain. You wanted me to changed it back to red, you get to explain it to her." Angel shot him a wicked grin.

Gideon shook his head. "Not me! Hey, you changed it in the first place." Gideon looked at her mulishly and crossed his arms. There was no way he was going to tell his wife why her bike had changed color, as then he'd have to admit why he'd asked Angel to keep it red. Hey, if big scary Narn Marines could be afraid of Deborah when it came to the bike, who was he, a mere human, not to be scared? Of course, he wasn't about to admit that to Angel. Knowing her, she'd take great delight in his wariness, although he had a feeling her resistance to telling Deborah was because she was a little scared herself.

"OK, there's only one way to settle this. I'll toss you for who tells Deborah." He grinned at Angel. He was feeling lucky.

Angel eyed him suspiciously. "Toss me for it? With what?"

Wordlessly, Gideon bent down and opened the toolbox that stood beside the bike. He felt Angel watch as he scrounged around inside it, before he straightened up, holding a small round disk with a hole in the middle. "With this."

Angel's eyebrow shot up in question. "But it has no head or tails on it!"

Gideon grinned. "That's easily fixed." Bending down, he retrieved a screwdriver from the toolbox and quickly scratched a mark on one side of the disk. He looked it over for a moment, then stood up again and showed it to Angel.

"Marked side is heads, unmarked side is tails. OK?" Angel nodded. Gideon suspected that she was only playing along because it was a gamble and there was an even chance that he would lose. He held up the disk between thumb and forefinger, poised to toss it. "You call..." He hesitated and wagged a finger in warning. "And no cheating!"

Angel gave him a look of wide-eyed innocence. "I don't know what you could possibly mean, Captain!"

Gideon snorted. "You know damn well what I mean, Ms. Telekinesis!" Angel wrinkled her nose at him in response, and then nodded. Gideon suspected by the look that flickered in her eyes, that for a moment, she had considered it.

Angel called heads, and holding her breath, watched as Gideon tossed the disk into the air. Both of them watched its flight as it headed toward the ground. It made a soft ping as it landed, bounced once, then remained motionless. Neither of them moved for a second, then both went to look at what side was up.

"Yes!" Exclaimed Angel, loudly and happily, grinning at Gideon broadly as he groaned. "I win, Captain. You get to tell Demon about the new color of her bike." She grinned at him mercilessly

Gideon groaned again. "You're enjoying this, aren't you?"

Angel smiled sweetly in response. "I must admit, it's fun to see that you're as afraid of Demon as everyone else."

Gideon looked at her with his best poker face. "I am not afraid of Deborah!"

Angel laughed in response. "You are too!"

Gideon started to laugh. "You know this is ridiculous. What do we have to be afraid of?" He walked over to the bike and pointed at it. "It really does look fantastic in red. I'm sure Deborah won't mind at all that you changed the color. I'm sure she'll love it."

Angel laughed. "We can but hope."

They smiled at each other. Deep down, they both knew Deborah wouldn't be mad. They fell silent and Gideon walked over to the bike again. He then asked the question that had been on his mind since he had exited the maintenance hatch, and had seen Angel standing by the bike. "What are you doing up here, Angel? I know it wasn't to come and do a quick 'paint job'?" He was surprised when he saw a look of guilt flicker across her face. She had the appearance of someone who had been caught doing something bad.

Angel cleared her throat. "I heard that the bullet car tube was going to be shut down for a few hours, so I took the opportunity to come and take a look at the bike. I'm sorry, I should have asked permission first." Gideon frowned as he saw her lower her head, avoiding eye contact with him.

"Angel, you didn't do anything wrong, and you don't have to ask permission to come up here and look at it. You're more than welcome anytime, you should know that?" His tone was gently questioning. Angel lifted her gaze to meet his eyes, smiling slightly but not speaking. Gideon changed the subject. "So what do you think of her?" He asked, as he moved over to the bike to lean on it, with one hand resting on the seat.

Angel's face lit up. [That's more like it,] thought Gideon happily.

"Its magnificent. I bet it goes like a bat out of hell?" asked Angel, her excitement obvious.

Gideon nodded. "She can go from 0-100 kph in under four seconds, and her top speed is over 250 kph."

Angel looked at the bike with envy, and for the first time Gideon realized that she wanted a ride. Again,

he was surprised that she had never said anything, or asked if he would take her on the bike. "I came up here to tinker with her for a bit, but that can wait. How about we take her for a spin?"

The look of excitement that crossed Angel's face was of great delight to Gideon. It hit him again that he loved to see her happy and excited. [God knows, she's had little enough happiness in recent years.] If a simple ride on a motorcycle would please her, then he planned on giving her the ride of her life.

Angel looked at him, her eyes sparkling. "Really? I've always wanted to ride on a motorbike. There's something about the speed and the freedom it represents." She finished excitedly.

"Well then, what are we waiting for?"

Angel felt a rush of excitement well up inside her, making her skin tingle. She was finally going to get a ride on the motorbike. She didn't have to look in a mirror to know that her face was beaming.

She watched, as Gideon went over to the bike and pulled it off the stand it rested on, lifting it only slightly to take it off and then resting it on the small stand that he kicked down from the side of the bike. Her breath caught in her throat, as he removed the leather jacket he'd been wearing. Until now, she'd been so preoccupied with the bike and who got to tell Demon, that she'd failed to notice how Gideon was dressed. The leather jacket he always wore on away missions, black jeans, and a black T-Shirt. He looked like an image from a mid twentieth century movie, minus the silly 'ducktail' hairdo that men sported in that time. Angel felt herself growing warm as he placed the jacket to one side. His T-shirt was tight and fitted him perfectly, highlighting rather than hiding his lean frame beneath, the short sleeves defining his lightly muscled arms.

Angel suddenly realized that if she were going to be riding on the bike with him, she would have her arms wrapped around his waist to stop herself from falling off. Their bodies would be tight together, and she knew that being so close, she would be constantly inhaling his scent. Angel felt herself growing hot between her legs. [Stop it!] She quickly reprimanded herself. She could not have those kinds of thoughts. This was just going to be a simple ride, nothing else. It would do no good to let herself get turned on.

Angel took in a deep breath, ignoring the fact that Gideon was now bending over the bike looking at something, giving her an incredible view of his butt. Closing her eyes, she counted to ten while thinking of ice, lots of it. Finally, when she felt more under control, or rather had her raging hormones under control, Angel opened her eyes just in time.

Gideon straightened and looked at her. "I just have to move the bike down to the track, and then we can be on our way." He smiled and began to push the bike toward the ledge. Suddenly, Angel was on the other side of the bike, smiling at him as she grabbed hold of it. "Let me help."

Gideon laughed gently. "I can manage."

Angel nodded. "Oh, I know you're big and strong enough to do it yourself, but I still want to help."

Gideon cocked his head to one side and laughed again. "All right then." Smiling at her, he nodded, indicating that they should move forward. Together, they pushed the bike to the ledge.

Gideon stood opposite Angel, as she helped him move the bike the short distance to the track. He was desperately trying to not stare at her chest. She was wearing a particularly tight, red T-shirt and black leather pants. The T-shirt emphasized the fullness of her breasts, and didn't hide the fact that her nipples were erect.

With the color of the bike sorted out, and the offer of the ride taken care of, he now had time to notice how Angel looked. [Sexy! Why does she have to look so damned sexy?] wondered Gideon, with a silent groan. The fact that her bright blue eyes were sparkling, and her face was flushed and grinning with excitement, only made her look more breathtakingly beautiful.

He felt his eyes wander back to her breasts. [Stop it!] He quickly moved his gaze away, looking ahead, as they reached the ledge and carefully lifted the bike down the few centimeters drop. Gideon silently hoped that Angel hadn't caught him staring. He looked at her sideways. She wasn't looking at him and didn't give the impression that she'd noticed him gawking at her. [Thank God!]

"Easy does it." Gideon said, as they maneuvered the bike down onto the track. Once the bike was settled safely, he looked at Angel, a smile on his face.

"Right. So are you ready for your ride, Angel?" There was no response for a moment, then he heard Angel clear her throat, loudly.

"Hello, Captain. I'm up here!" Gideon saw her hand wave in front of his eyes, and to his mortification, he realized that he had asked her the question while staring straight at her breasts. [I didn't just do that, please God, tell me I didn't.] He let his eyes wander up to meet a pair of very amused blue ones. Angel stood looking at him, an eyebrow arched and her arms folded. The only relief was that she was clearly amused, not insulted or upset with him.

"Unless I suddenly grew shorter, Captain, I don't think my face is down there."

Gideon felt his cheeks start to flame, and to his horror, he realized he was blushing. He, Captain Matthew Gideon, was blushing. [She will never let me live this down!] Well, far be it from him to admit he was staring at something he shouldn't. He lifted his head and looked at Angel's face.

"I was *not* staring at your breasts." As soon as the words were out, Gideon felt like kicking himself. [Well done, you jackass.]

The unexpected sound of Angel's laughter echoed along the bullet tube. Gideon decided she was enjoying his discomfort way too much. It was time to turn the tables on her. He had felt her checking his butt out while he was bending over the seat of the bike, checking the exhaust on the other side.

"Laugh it up, Missy. I wasn't the only one staring at something they shouldn't." Gideon gave Angel a smug smile, as she quickly stopped laughing and her expression changed to one of guilt.

Her voice was husky, as she responded quickly, "I wasn't looking at your..." Angel's voice trailed off as she started to blush.

Both of them looked at each other for a moment, then burst out laughing, shaking their heads. "Looks like we're both busted," Gideon said, finally.

Angel grinned at him. "I think we'd better both agree to keep our eyes firmly at eye level from now on."

Her voice was lightly teasing, but Gideon could hear the hidden meaning and warning behind it. If they went any further, things could go too far, and they had made a promise to never let that happen because of their mutual love for Deborah.

"Come on, Angel, let's take that ride." Angel, still laughing, nodded her agreement.

Gideon turned the bike around, so that it was facing the long stretch of the closed off bullet tube, facing away from where the maintenance crew was busy working. As he did so, he could feel Angel tighten the hold she had around his waist, bringing her even tighter against his back. He could feel the warmth of her body as she pressed against him, the warmth of her breath against his neck, tickling the hairs on the back of it. She was close against him, and the wonderful ever-present breeze was blowing from behind him, so he was able to inhale her scent. A mixture of spices that was both subtle and highly erotic. As it filled his nostrils, Gideon's feelings of desire for her returned in full force, but he clamped down on them, forcefully. He reminded himself again that there lay a danger zone, not to be entered at any cost. Shaking the feelings off, Gideon looked over his shoulder and smiled at Angel. "You ready for this?"

She nodded and grinned back at him. "Very much so. Just one thing though, Captain?"

"What is it, Angel?" Asked Gideon, puzzled at her serious tone.

"Fast. Can we go fast?"

Gideon burst out laughing, realizing that Angel was a speed freak. "How fast?"

Angel peered at him carefully. "How fast did you say this baby could go?"

Gideon's eyebrow shot up. "Over 250 kph, but I doubt we can get it up to that speed on such a short distance." He had to smother a grin at the look of disappointment that crossed her face.

Angel pouted slightly, but then a mischievous grin spread across her lips. "But you can try, can't you?" She was looking at him so eagerly that Gideon couldn't resist.

"For you, Angel, I'll do my best." Gideon was rewarded with Angel jumping up and down on the bike with excitement, smiling the biggest, brightest smile he had ever seen. Laughing, Gideon turned around and began to rev the engine. He'd always enjoyed the fact that when Edgar's Industries built the bike kits, they used a pollution free and nearly silent Minbari power source, but then added a sound crystal, that precisely imitated the engine roar the original bike would have made under acceleration.

"Hold on tight, Angel. You are about to experience the ride of your life." He gave Angel a second to regain her hold on his waist, then he released the brake and the bike shot forward like a thoroughbred out of a starting gate. The bike reached 100 kph in less than four seconds, gaining speed rapidly, as he pressed down on the accelerator.

Behind him, he could just hear Angel's shriek of delight and excitement as they continued to speed up. The walls blurred as they flew down the length of the bullet tube. Gideon looked down at the speedometer and smiled. [Not bad!] After about half a kilometer, the bike had already reached a speed of 150 kph and the needle was still moving up rapidly.

Behind him he heard Angel yell at him. "Faster, Matt! Faster!" Gideon throttled down, and the bike jumped forward, going faster and faster. Suddenly, there was a loud, ear cracking bang, and the bike lurched dangerously sideways. Gideon barely registered Angel's startled scream behind him. Reacting quickly, he engaged the brakes. For a moment, they seemed to hold, but then the bike lurched again and he lost control. Gideon's mind raced, trying to figure out how to stop himself driving them straight into the wall. Although he had managed to slow while the brakes had been working, if they hit the wall at their current speed, it could kill or seriously injure them.

Gideon gritted his teeth and fought for control as the bike shuddered, braking as hard as he dared. He was too busy trying to turn the bike away from the wall to see a piece of metal on the ground directly in front of them. Gideon's heart stopped beating, as he felt the bike bounce, threatening to flip him and Angel forward over the handlebars.

It was pure instinct that got Gideon moving, he just hoped he'd dropped enough speed not to kill them both. He yelled at Angel, "Jump!" then threw himself off the bike. Gideon ducked and rolled as he hit the ground. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the bike slide away from him, coming to a grinding halt a few meters away. He lay still for a moment, too stunned to move, breathing raggedly, as he tried to get his furiously beating heart back under control.

Gideon rolled from his back onto his stomach, wincing as he moved, flexing his legs and then his arms, checking for any sign of serious injury. He let out a breath of relief. He was bruised and battered, but luckily not seriously hurt. He looked across at the bike again, registering for the first time what had happened. The loud bang he had heard had been the back tire blowing out. "Sonofabitch!" Gideon swore loudly. At the speed they had been going, a blow out could have been fatal. By some miracle, he and Angel had survived.

"Angel!" Gideon scanned the area behind him, his blood turning cold when he saw Angel lying further back down the track. Gideon sprang to his feet, his own aching body forgotten, as he ran full speed to where her body was lying sprawled, unmoving.

Gideon skidded to a halt when he reached Angel. As he'd run toward her, she had pulled herself up onto her knees and was looking at him, but her eyes were glazed and she looked badly shaken. Going down on his knees beside her, Gideon glanced over her body, checking for any visible signs of injury as she knelt beside him, but he could see none. Gently, he called to her while he stroked her cheek, trying to get her attention, worried by how dazed she seemed. He feared again that she had been seriously hurt, maybe having sustained a head injury.

Quickly, he raised his arm and went to activate his commlink, but then remembered that he'd taken it off before coming up here, so he wouldn't be disturbed while he worked on the bike. "Shit!" Gideon shook his head then turned his attention back to Angel. As he looked, her eyes closed and she started to crumple sideways. He grabbed her quickly to stop her falling, then slid an arm behind her shoulders and gently raised her, supporting her neck, cradling her head against his chest, while with his other hand he started to caress her cheek again.

"Angel, can you hear me?" He waited for a sign that she was coming round, but she remained still, her face pale. Gideon clamped down on the panic he was beginning to feel.

"Angel, come on, be a good girl and wake up!" He could hear the desperation in his own voice. Still nothing. Gideon looked in the direction where the maintenance crew was working. He knew that with

the equipment they were using, they wouldn't have heard the bang from the blow out. Gideon chewed his lip as he contemplated leaving Angel and running for help. The only problem with that idea was that he wasn't happy about leaving Angel alone.

Gideon looked down at her, trying again to rouse her by calling her name. This time, to his utter relief, he heard her moan softly and her eyes opened. "Thank God!" He watched as she struggled to focus on him for a moment, then she looked at him in confusion.

"What happened?"

Gideon started laughing with relief and hugged her to him, not answering her question straight away. He only let go when he heard her muffled voice against his chest, asking him again what had happened.

"The back tire blew out, you were thrown from the bike," explained Gideon, while watching her with concern. He saw Angel look towards where the bike was lying, her eyes wide with shock. She looked back up at him. "Are you all right, Angel? Can you move?" He watched as Angel tentatively moved her limbs.

Finally, she looked up at him. "I'm fine, just a little bruised and shaken, I think."

Gideon smiled at her with relief. "Thank God! I thought I'd killed you."

"I think I was stunned and had the wind knocked out of me, more than anything..." She paused to look at him sternly. "And just for the record, Matt, what happened wasn't your fault. It was an accident."

Gideon looked down to where she had placed her hand on his chest, and then looked back at her. She didn't blame him and realistically, he knew that he wasn't to blame. But should he have checked the wheels before they started? Gone slower? Gideon sighed inwardly, there were a lot of 'what ifs'. "We were damned lucky."

Angel nodded her agreement as she again looked at the fallen bike. "That and the fact that we both have hard heads, saved us from being seriously hurt." She grinned up at him, using humor to relieve the tension. Angel shifted her position where she still lay against Gideon, with his arm around her.

"You want to help me up, Captain? Although I'm not hurt, I think my legs have turned to rubber and I'll need some help to stand up straight again." Gideon nodded, and held Angel's arm to help her to her feet. She stumbled, as her legs seemed to buckle, and he grabbed hold of her.

"Steady," said Gideon, as Angel used her hands against his chest to steady herself. The color in her cheeks drained away, and Gideon's concerns returned. "Are you sure you're all right, Angel?" Before she could reply he rushed on. "I think I should get you up to Medbay and have Luke check you out."

Angel pushed herself away from his hold and shook her head. "Honestly, I'm fine Matt. Just a little dizzy, but that's more from shock than anything." She paused when she saw his disbelief. "Captain, I've been working in Medbay for months now, and I have enough medical knowledge to know if I'm fine or not." She smiled at him reassuringly.

Gideon sucked in his breath, telling himself that she was right. He smiled at her a little self-consciously. "Sorry, Angel. I just..." He trailed off, unable to find the words. Angel reached out and placed her hand on his arm.

"I know, Matt." Neither of them spoke. All they needed to say was communicated loud and clear in their silence.

Angel was the first to speak, as she looked over at the damaged bike and shook her head. "Demon is going to be seriously pissed when she sees that!"

Gideon looked at the bike and sighed. "First, she'll be relieved to see that we're still alive, then she'll kill us."

Angel chuckled in agreement. "Well, maybe we can fix it, and she'll be none the wiser?"

Gideon let out a snort. "You know Deborah better than that, Angel. She'll be able to sense that something happened, we could never hide this from her. Besides..." Gideon pointed at them both. Angel's red T-shirt and leather pants were smeared with dirt and grime, her hair was a mess, and her arms had dirt on them, barely hiding several bruises she had sustained when she had fallen. Gideon knew that his clothes weren't much better. "We both look a mess, there's no hiding that."

Angel laughed out loud, and Gideon joined in. Angel was the first to get herself back under control. "So, do you think you'll be able to fix it?" She asked as she waved a hand at the bike.

Gideon sighed. "The tire will be easy enough, as for the rest of it...well, I'll have to see when I've taken a closer look at how bad it is." Gideon turned to head for the bike, then hesitated a moment as he looked back at Angel.

"You stay here, you still look a little shaken. I'll go take a look and then if you're feeling up to it, you can give me a hand getting the bike back to the ledge, so we can see about patching her up." Angel nodded and then he walked towards the bike, praying that the damage looked worse from a distance than it did close up.

Angel stood and watched as Gideon walked over to the fallen bike and began inspecting it. Although she wasn't really hurt, she was grateful for the time that Gideon had given her, because she needed the distance from him to regain her composure. She was quite shaken and bruised from the accident, and she had to suppress a chill that ran through her, as she remembered the moment of the blow out and seconds later being thrown off the bike. She was relieved that she didn't remember actually hitting the ground. Considering how her body ached, that would have hurt. A lot! But that wasn't what had her needing a moment to compose herself. No, it was what had come afterwards.

She had been knocked out for a few seconds when she had hit the ground, but she had become aware of everything around her when she had heard Gideon calling her name. Angel felt herself tremble as she remembered that moment.

She had heard Gideon calling her, but was still a little dazed, confused and aching, and had felt herself sliding back into unconsciousness. Then she had felt his arms around her as he caught her, holding her body against his, her head cradled against his shoulder. It had been then that any pain she had been feeling ceased to exist. All she could think of and feel was his closeness, her body and senses acutely aware of his touch and his unique musk, which filled her nostrils as she rested against him. [No, not unique. There's one other man who smells...] Angel pushed the thoughts of that other man out of her mind.

At that moment, she hadn't wanted to let him know that she was awake, because she knew that once he did, he would let go of her. Just for a moment, she wanted to lie there in his arms and pretend...[Pretend what Angel?] Her inner voice queried. The inner voice that Angel hoped had finally gotten itself a life and gone to bother someone else. She ignored it and went on to remember the feeling of Gideon's arms around her, and his fingers gently caressing her cheek as he called to her. At that moment, just for that *one* moment in time, Angel had let herself believe that he was...[He was what?] Again her inner voice interrupted, but this time it did not let her ignore it. [I'm still here, and I'm going to remind you one more time that you are NOT to go there! Those thoughts are...]

"Oh, shut up!" hissed Angel. She did not need her inner voice to remind her of anything. She was very well aware of not allowing herself to think about Gideon being hers. She knew that, and she certainly didn't need some pain-in-the-ass conscience reminding her. Angel bet if her conscience could, it would tattoo a reminder on her head. [He belongs to Demon! He'll never be yours! Forget it!] Sometimes, Angel really hated having a conscience.

"Did you say something, Angel?"

Angel's eyes widened, and she looked up to find Gideon poised over the bike, looking at her questioningly. She hadn't realized that she had spoken aloud. She smiled at him and shook her head. "Didn't say a word." Angel prayed that her voice sounded believable. It must have been, as Gideon grunted, and without another word, went back to examining the bike. From his body language, and the grunt he had just given her, Angel knew that the bike wasn't in good condition. Angel contemplated going to ask Gideon if she could help, but she decided against it for the moment. If he needed help, she was sure he would ask for it.

Angel went back to thinking about being in his arms, stubbornly ignoring her inner voice. She had savored the feeling of his closeness, but when she had really become aware, she had heard the desperation in his voice. Remembering the accident, she realized that the reason he was holding her and calling to her was because he was afraid that she was hurt. So Angel had opened her eyes, letting him believe that she had regained consciousness. She had faked how dazed she was, so that it wouldn't appear to him that she had been acting. That would have pissed him off no end, and she had been enjoying their closeness too much to want to set him off.

When she had asked Gideon what had happened, Angel had found herself being pulled against him again, as he hugged her hard, laughing. The thrill of being held like that, his relief tangible, was enough to almost overwhelm her, and she had immediately felt bad about faking being unconscious. Yet at the same time, she could feel her body growing warm with desire, able to hear Gideon's heart beating beneath her ear. Feeling herself grow warm had set off alarm bells. Thanks to her ever-present conscience, Angel had pulled away, forcing down the flutter she felt in her stomach when she had pulled her head back and looked up to find his mouth so close. It would have been so easy to lift her hand up and snake it around Gideon's neck, to pull his head down toward her, to claim his mouth in a passionate kiss.

[You're doing it again!] This time her inner voice came loud and clear, and Angel couldn't ignore it. She was letting her thoughts and feelings stray where they shouldn't. Angel took in a deep breath to clear her mind. Instead, she thought of what had happened in the moments that had followed. Purposefully, Angel did not let her mind stray to how he had looked at her with such care and concern, his voice gentle and caring. Instead, she focused on what he had told her.

[Demon is going to kill us if that bike is badly damaged,] thought Angel, as she chewed at her lower

lip. [Nah, she won't kill me! She can't kill me!] Angel told herself bravely. They shared a link, and because of that and the fact that they were sisters, Demon wouldn't kill her. As for Gideon, Demon loved him too much to ever kill him. [No, but she can inflict unimaginable pain on you without killing you!] Her inner voice piped up. Angel growled at it inwardly, and she could have sworn she heard it chuckle at her, before going silent again. Angel found herself fervently praying that the bike could be fixed and made to look as good as new again.

Gideon's voice interrupted her reverie. "Angel? Have you recovered enough to give me a hand getting this thing upright? It weighs a tonne. If you're still feeling faint I'll go get some help from the maintenance crew."

The last thing Angel wanted was company. She smiled at Gideon and moved over to help him get the bike upright, then went back to where she had been sitting, thinking. She looked back over at Gideon, who was now pushing the bike toward her. It looked like it was hard going, because it no longer had a round back wheel. The wheel was bent and twisted, causing the frame to drag, making the bike sluggish and heavy. She could see that Gideon was clenching his jaw, as he strained while pushing the crippled vehicle. His brow was creased, and his arms and face glowed with perspiration. The fact that his T-shirt was starting to mold itself to his chest didn't help Angel suppress her sexual thoughts about her brother-in-law. She couldn't help herself; her eyes were drawn to him like a magnet.

Gideon's straining arm muscles were clearly defined by the short sleeves of his T-shirt. As he put his weight into pushing the bike forward, Angel could see how his jeans seemed to tighten across his legs. She knew that his jeans would once again be stretched across his butt, fitting even more snugly, leaving nothing to her imagination, and she had a *very* vivid imagination. Angel clamped down on the whimper that threatened to escape her throat.

[Stop it!] Quickly, Angel changed her thoughts completely, forcing herself to think about a medical report that Luke had asked her to complete. She was going over the facts of it as Gideon passed her. She sucked in her breath and closed her eyes, not allowing her self to stare at his butt. She tried to think about the details of the report, but for the life of her, she couldn't remember a single thing about it.

Gideon pushed the bike along towards where it was kept on the ledge. He was by no means weak, but with the back wheel twisted and the frame bent, the bike was damned heavy. He found himself getting more hot and bothered by the minute. The combination of fear, adrenaline and worry was starting to fray his temper as he continued to think about what had happened. A tire did not just blow out suddenly like that, something must have caused it to weaken. Gideon mentally went through a list of possibilities. His mind zeroed in on one, or rather five causes.

"Those damned Marines! When I get my hands on them..." Gideon's voice trailed off in a growl of curses, muttering under his breath about what he planned to do to them if he found out that their little ride had damaged the tire. "One bike is not made for five Narns to ride!" He growled as he pushed the bike past Angel.

Gideon's back and arm muscles were starting to burn and ache with the strain. He could sense Angel following behind him and his irritation level grew. Here he was, struggling to push the bike, [She's not blind! Surely she can see I need help?] and she was just strolling along behind him. She looked like she had recovered from her fall. The least she could do was to lend him a hand, or rather in her case a 'mind' and help him. Gideon was too ill tempered to admit he was being unfair. All he cared about was

that his body was hurting like hell, and Deborah's bike was damaged and he would have to be the one to have to tell her about it.

Gideon continued on, saying nothing to Angel, but as they walked on a few more meters, he could feel her eyes on his back. [Or rather on my backside again!] He thought. He clamped down on his annoyance, as he glanced back over his shoulder at Angel. "Feeling better, Angel?" He asked softly.

Angel nodded, a small smile across her lips. "Yes, much better, thank you."

Gideon had to prevent a snort from escaping his mouth. [Yeah, and I bet the view has helped.] A small part of him slapped his wrist, telling him he was being unfair, but he paid it no mind. His body ached, and he was still feeling guilty about almost killing Angel, even though he knew it wasn't his fault. He was also worried about the bike, wondering how the hell he would be able to fix the damage, and what Deborah's reaction would be. Who could blame him if his temper was fraying a little?

"So that little rest back there helped, did it?" No one should have been able to miss the sarcasm that laced his words as he spoke, while continuing to push the bike. He would bet his life that it had grown three times heavier since he started pushing it.

He glanced back at Angel to see how she reacted. Either she was oblivious to his sarcastic tone, or she was choosing to ignore it. [Too busy staring at my butt, no doubt!]

Her only response was another smile, her voice soft and husky as she replied. "Yes, it did. I'm still a little shaken, but other than that, my body feels back under control and less wobbly."

[Your body maybe under control, honey, but maybe you should have a word with your eyes!] Thought Gideon, testily. "Good to hear, Angel," he said, with forced control. But that control didn't last long as the bike felt as if it had gained another tonne. He could sense Angel still strolling along quite happily behind him. [That's it!]

Gideon stopped abruptly, leaning most of the weight of the bike against his legs, while he helped keep it upright by holding onto the handlebars. He scowled at Angel. "If you are quite done admiring the view back there, do you think you could give me a hand with this bike, before it breaks my back?" Gideon barked the words, too far gone with annoyance and ill temper to feel guilty about the harshness of his tone.

Angel came to a halt, her eyes widening in surprise. She stood staring at him for a moment in silence. [At least she's not gawking at my butt any more!] But neither did she look like someone who had been again caught doing something she shouldn't. She placed her hands on her hips and grinned at him mischievously. "Now, Captain, a girl could never get tired of *that* view. But if you need a hand, I'd be more than happy to give it to you."

For a moment, Gideon couldn't believe Angel's response. [She's flirting with me?] he wondered, incredulously, although he shouldn't have been surprised. He tried to say something but found that not only had Angel knocked the fire out of his temper, but she had also succeeded in rendering him speechless. Gideon tried to find his voice when Angel moved closer to him, looking first at the bike then back up to him.

She gave him an enquiring smile. "So, Captain, where *exactly* would you like me to give you a hand?" Angel cocked her head to one side waiting for him to instruct her. He watched as a small frown suddenly appeared across her brow, then she reached up and Gideon felt her fingers touch his chin,

pausing as if about to do something.

Angel cleared her throat and smiled at him broadly. "It's awfully unattractive to keep your mouth gaping open like a fish out of water, Captain." Gideon reflexively snapped his mouth shut. Angel burst into laughter at what Gideon could only assume was the expression of someone feeling like a monumental jackass. Then suddenly, he found himself laughing, his foul temper evaporating quickly in the light of her teasing.

Gideon was the first to stop laughing. Looking at Angel, he said softly. "I'm sorry, Angel. I shouldn't have snapped at you like that."

Angel said nothing for a few seconds, and then smiled at him gently. "I totally understand. That's why I didn't take it personally." Angel paused to give him a wicked grin. "If I had, you'd be splattered against the bullet tube wall."

Gideon burst out laughing, again. "Then I'm *very* relieved that you didn't."

Angel winked at him. "You owe me one." They grinned back at each other, then she went on, pointing at the bike. "So, what do you need me to do?"

"She's dragging with the back wheel bent, making her weigh ten times what she should," explained Gideon. "Think you can give me a hand with..." He stumbled to a halt when he saw Angel break into a naughty grin. He cleared his throat and grinned back at her indulgently before continuing. "Could you put your *mind* to helping me move her back to the ledge, so we can see what we can do about fixing her?"

Angel rubbed her chin, as if having to make a tough decision. "Hmmm, you mean give up my nice view?" Gideon's eyebrow shot up at the question, and she continued quickly, her voice shaking with suppressed laughter. "Yes, I think I can put my mind to that."

Angel turned and focused her eyes on the bike. Gideon felt the bike shudder gently, then it moved away from where it had been resting against his legs. He let go of the handlebars and took a step back to watch in never ending wonder at what Angel could do with her telekinesis. The bike lifted a couple of inches off the ground and remained hovering there, unmoving, as if suspended by invisible ropes.

Angel asked him lightly, without looking at him. "Is this what you had in mind?"

Gideon cleared his throat. "Well, actually I think it's more what *you* have in *your* mind."

Angel smiled. "Right, now let's move it back over to the ledge."

Gideon nodded and quickly took hold of the handlebars, using them to help Angel move and steer the bike. Although she would have been able to do everything herself, he knew it could be a strain for her to keep moving something so heavy, so thought it best to help her out. [Although I really should be walking behind getting a good view myself.] Gideon smiled inwardly as they moved closer to the bike's resting place. Angel no doubt thought that she had gotten away with teasing him. [Not quite, Angel. Not quite,] thought Gideon, wickedly.

Gideon sighed heavily as he looked at the bike, now resting back on its stand. Angel's help had enabled

him to get the bike back to its ledge quickly, and hauling it up onto its stand hadn't been the usual backbreaking job. [Telekinesis is a handy thing to have around, that's for sure.] Angel looked a little weary after the long walk back, but she refused to admit that she was tired, so Gideon had turned his attention to the damaged bike. It wasn't good.

"I hate to say it, Angel, but it may be a write-off. I'm not sure if all this damage can be fixed." He gestured at the dents and scrapes on the gas tank, the bent frame and the twisted back wheel. Even the handlebars looked misshapen. About the only thing that looked intact was the front wheel. On closer examination Gideon could see that the forks holding the wheel in place were misaligned. He sighed again.

Angel came and stood next to him, allowing him to smell the scent she wore, now mixed with her own fresh perspiration from the effort she had made in hauling the bike back. The combination was incredibly erotic. Gideon moved away a few centimeters. [Don't go there, Matt, no matter how good she smells.]

Angel followed him and laid her hand on his arm, increasing Gideon's arousal. The touch of her hand on his bare skin made the hairs on the back of his neck rise. [And they're not the only things that'll be rising if you keep on doing that, Angel!]

Gideon glanced at Angel and saw the wicked smile on her face. [Damn it, she's doing it on purpose! She knows damned well that she's turning me on, and she's enjoying it! Oh, Angel girl, you play with fire, you get burned.] Gideon kept his face straight, but his inner smile was as wicked as Angel's.

"Is there nothing you can do, Matt? Can't you fix it *up*?" Angel laid the emphasis on the last word, while her hand continued to rest, soft and hot, against Gideon's arm.

[Payback time, Angel.] Gideon chose his next words carefully. "I'm sure I can do something with it. I have a way with my hands, you know. I just have to touch some things, and they respond." He laid his hand over hers and squeezed gently, his fingers finding the pulse in her wrist as he did so. It was racing. [Looks like I'm not the only one fighting for control here, Angel.] Angel pulled her hand away quickly.

Gideon kept his amusement out of his voice as he continued, "But..." he paused and looked straight into Angel's eyes, before allowing his gaze to drift down to her breasts again. Her erect nipples stretched the fabric of her T-shirt. [Nice way to salute the Captain, Angel.] He moved his eyes back to her face and caught the first signs of a blush, which gave him all the encouragement he needed to go on.

"It's not a big *but*, of course. In fact, some people might think it's a nice *but*-Deborah certainly does--*but* I'd hate to make an *ass* of myself here, so tell me if I'm being *cheeky*, won't you, Angel?" By now, her face was flaming the same color as her T-shirt, so Gideon eased off. "*But* I may need a little help if I'm going to get this thing back in running order." The color in Angel's face had faded, so Gideon decided to turn the heat back up.

"It does run well, you know. Thrusting cylinders, pounding in and out, giving all the power you need to really hammer down the tube, engine roaring, gas tank vibrating between your legs..." Gideon paused as Angel turned to look at him, her bright blue eyes blazing.

"Enough!" He watched as a trickle of sweat ran down Angel's throat, down her chest and in between her breasts. As his eyes were in the vicinity, he could hardly help noticing that her nipples looked harder than ever. [Bet they're as sensitive as hell, rubbing against that T-shirt.] Gideon smiled and looked

back up to Angel's face. Her flush had faded again, and she was grinning.

"OK, so I deserved that, but let's call it quits, shall we? Before one of us forgets ourselves?" Angel's hand was held out to shake.

Gideon took her hand and used it to pull her against him, hard. His arms went around her like lightning and he crushed her to his chest as he kissed her once, hard and fast, then let her go. By now, they were both breathing heavily, and Gideon knew that Angel would have felt his arousal when he held her close. He grinned at her again and nodded his head.

"Now we're quits. Let's see if we can fix this bike."

Angel sat on the ledge watching the Captain work on the bike. She was working pretty hard herself; working on getting her raging hormones under control. His kiss had taken her totally by surprise and left her in a lather of lust, panic, fear, guilt and a few other emotions she didn't take the time to identify. As Matt had pulled her tightly against him, she'd felt his erection, raising her temperature, making her hot and wet inside. Angel sat with her knees drawn up under her chin, her arms wrapped around her ankles, concentrating on breathing evenly, and doing her best to hide her nipples, which were still standing out, stiff and sensitive. [I know the crew are supposed to come to attention when the Captain's present, but not like this!] Angel suppressed a smile at her thoughts.

Taking a deep calming breath, Angel thought back over the events of the last hour. She and Matt had teased each other, helped each other and laughed together. Although she was half cursing herself for being so obvious about her desire for him, Angel had never felt more at ease with the Captain. She found herself contrasting that friendly teasing, albeit with an underlying sexual tension, with her previous experiences with Lucas. She found that she wanted more than just the passion she had shared with Lucas. Angel wanted the friendship that she had just shared with Matt, the friendship she could see Matt and Demon had together, which underpinned their love and desire for each other.

Thinking back on the kiss Matt had given her sent little shudders of pleasure through Angel's body, but she knew she wanted more than that. She didn't just want the lust driven passion that his kiss had held; she'd had that before, in the library on Eriadne and again in the orchard. Those times had been wonderful, exciting and passionate, but what she really wanted was the gentleness and affection she knew Matt could give the woman he loved, the things she saw him give to Demon. Angel wondered if she would ever experience a man giving her those things, but she knew that she deserved them as much as her sister. She may never feel the pleasure of Matt loving her as he loved Demon, but maybe there was another man out there, somewhere, who could love Angel just as much. Love her with the same passion, love, friendship and commitment with which the Captain loved her sister.

Angel made a resolution. She would find that man, the one who could give her everything she deserved. Not just the passion and sex, that was easy to find, that's what she'd had with Lucas. No, she wanted, she *deserved*, more than that. She pushed away that nagging voice that said, [But you love Lucas. You belong to him, body and soul,] and focused her attention on the man in front of her.

The sight the Captain presented was well worth a look. He was bent over the damaged bike, again giving her a spectacular view of his very sexy rear end. He was struggling to straighten the forks holding the front wheel in place and was sweating with the effort, making his black T-shirt cling to his chest and back. Having completed that task, Matt moved to the back wheel, sat on the ground with his legs spread wide apart, and started to loosen the nuts holding the wheel in place.

Angel dropped her face to her knees to hide her smile. She knew she shouldn't do this. Poor Matt was worried sick about the state the bike was in and how he was going to explain it to Demon. Angel knew she should help him, not hinder him, but she couldn't resist. The mischief-maker in her was always close to the surface, and this was just too good an opportunity. Angel concentrated on the nut Matt was loosening. As he pushed in one direction, Angel pushed in the other with her mind. She watched as his face reddened with effort, sweat breaking out on his forehead, trickling down his face and into the neck of his T-shirt. When she thought he might burst a blood vessel, Angel quickly let go, letting the spanner he was using turn abruptly, spinning the nut off into a darkened corner of the ledge.

Angel hid her face again to cover her smile at Matt's sigh of exasperation, and she watched between her knees as he stood and walked over to retrieve the nut. [This is the only way I'm going to get to play with the Captain's nuts!] She fought down the laugh that went with that thought.

"Having problems, Captain?" She kept her tone light and concerned, but saw Matt's eyes narrow suspiciously, as he walked back and knelt by the bike again. Angel wished he wouldn't do that. The position stretched his jeans over his butt in a way that sent her temperature soaring again.

The Captain looked over his shoulder as he started to work on the next nut. "I hadn't realized these nuts were fastened quite this tightly. I don't suppose you've recovered enough to put your mind to this little job, have you?"

Angel pasted a sorrowful smile on her face, and said, "I'll do what I can, Matt," while thinking, [and what I can do, is make them just a little harder to get off!] She watched him struggling with the next nut, sweating profusely and swearing profoundly. [Tsk tsk, Captain, such language!] This time, she gradually eased off her resistance, letting him think that the nut was just stiff. She watched as he carefully examined it when it finally came off, looking for signs as to why it had been so difficult to remove. He shook his head and started on the next one.

[Angel girl, you are pushing your luck!] Angel knew she should stop, but could resist. The sight of Matt's butt inside his tight jeans, his back, arm and shoulder muscles outlined by the soaking T-shirt, were irresistible. She put her mind into tightening the nut.

Gideon knelt by the side of the bike, straining to undo the nut holding the wheel in place. The task was proving more difficult than he had expected, but it provided a welcome distraction from what had gone earlier. When Angel had sat watching him in silence for so long, he'd wondered if he'd gone too far. Had that kiss been too much? It had been a moment of madness, an impulsive reaction to her teasing, to her beauty, to his desire for her, which had led Gideon to respond in the way he had. Part of him regretted it, but another part had enjoyed it too much to feel sorry. The taste of Angel's lips lingered on his mouth. That unique taste of honey that he'd never forgotten and often longed to try again.

For a moment, he let his mind linger on the memory. [Is that taste really her? Or is it something she puts on her lips? I've never tasted another woman like that!] He pushed the memory aside and concentrated on the bike.

Gideon had waited for Angel to speak, and when she'd stayed silent, watching him carefully, her expression serious, he'd eventually broken the silence by asking for help. Something about her reply made him suspicious, and although he had his back to her and was cursing creatively at the stubborn wheel, he was well aware that Angel's eyes were again firmly fixed on his butt.

The third nut suddenly gave way, and like the first, spun off into the darkness. Gideon looked at where it had landed and his suspicions increased. Something about the trajectory hadn't been quite right. Was it just his nasty, suspicious mind, carefully cultivated by years of dealing with shifty characters, or had a certain telekinetic just provided a little lift to the nut's flight path? And if Angel was playing with his nuts...Gideon suppressed a smile at the image that brought to mind and continued his train of thought. Maybe the difficulty he was having removing the wheel wasn't entirely natural. Maybe someone was having some fun with him, enjoying seeing him sweat and strain. Maybe it was time to raise the stakes.

Gideon lowered his head over the bike to hide a smile, then groaned theatrically and leaned back. He turned slightly so he could watch Angel's reaction, then started to flex his sore shoulders. Smiling at Angel, he said innocently, "I don't suppose you're any good at massage, are you Angel? My back is killing me."

Angel dropped her head back to her knees, but not quite fast enough to hide the look of guilt that crossed her face. [Gotcha!] Gideon carried on rubbing at his shoulders as he said, "And my shirt is soaked where I've been sweating. Oh well, only one thing I can do about that." He reached down and grabbed the bottom of his T-shirt, then pulled it quickly over his head. Throwing it to one side, Gideon stretched again, giving Angel a full view of his chest, glistening with sweat, and flexed the muscles of his shoulders.

A quick sideways glance confirmed his suspicions. Angel was watching him carefully, her tongue darting out to lick lips suddenly gone dry. [Lap it up, Angel.]

Gideon bent back to his task, knowing that the view Angel now had of his butt and the straining muscles in his back were probably increasing her temperature another few notches. [You should know me better than this, sweetheart. I don't fold, I raise.] The only problem was that his awareness of Angel's intense scrutiny was causing something else to be raised, and he knew he'd better get *that* under control before he turned back around to face his tormentor. But it seemed Angel had either taken the hint or was too distracted to play any more, as the remaining nuts holding the back wheel in place came loose much more easily, and Gideon soon had the twisted wheel off and resting on the floor.

Gideon groaned as he stood. His shoulders and back really did ache from their unaccustomed work out. He stood still for a moment, moving his arms and shoulders around to try to relieve the stiffness, then he closed his eyes and threw his head back, turning his head back and forth to ease his aching neck. The sensation of hands moving over his back, neck and shoulders took Gideon by surprise and he jumped, then spun around to look at Angel. She was still sitting on the floor, a couple of meters away from him, smiling at him, but the feeling of hands massaging his back continued.

"I do a damned good massage, Matt, and I can do it from way over here." Angel's voice was low and husky, as sexy as hell, as her smile widened. Gideon groaned with pleasure and closed his eyes again. The invisible hands were now kneading his shoulders, digging into the stiff muscles and releasing their tension. It felt like at least a dozen hands were massaging him, then some of them moved to his chest, working their way down his rib cage. Gideon doubled over suddenly, as the massage turned into tickling, and he soon found himself rolling around on the floor, begging for mercy as he laughed helplessly.

Angel quickly relented, and Gideon propped himself up on one elbow, grinning at her. "Stick to the massage and you could make a fortune, but if you try tickling me again, you'll get spanked!" He laughed when Angel stuck her tongue out at him and grinned back. He shook his head, muttering,

"Hopeless, absolutely hopeless," and pushed himself back to his feet.

Bending to pick up the wheel, Gideon carried it over to where he kept the spare, thinking how much better he felt after the massage. [Mind you, it's the least she could do after messing me around like that!] He smiled to himself, not really angry, but wondering exactly what other games Angel might have up her sleeve. Picking up the spare wheel, he carried it back to the bike and set it down. Angel hadn't moved from her spot, and she looked up at him again as he sighed.

"I'm not sure there's any point in putting this on. The frame is still twisted, the handlebars bent, and the dents and scrapes are so bad, I don't think I have the tools to fix it. I think I'm just going to have to tell Deborah that I wrecked her bike." Gideon dreaded that prospect. Not because Deborah would be mad, he knew she'd be far more concerned than angry. But he also knew how much she loved her bike, how much fun she got from riding it, and he hated the thought of her missing that enjoyment.

It had also been a Christmas present, almost the first such gift Deborah had allowed anyone to give her. It had taken a lot for her to conquer her fears and let someone get close enough to do that for her, and now he'd wrecked it. Gideon knew that his wife would never blame him for what had happened, but he'd always blame himself for not having checked the bike out properly before the ride. He sighed again and shook his head. [How am I going to tell her?]

Angel watched Gideon closely, as he looked down at the bike. He could put on a poker face and hide his feelings completely when he chose, but when Gideon relaxed and trusted the people around him, his face was incredibly expressive, showing exactly what he was feeling. What he was feeling right then was sadness and regret. Every line of his face and body expressed that. Angel was secretly thrilled that Gideon trusted her enough to let her see his feelings, that he was relaxed enough in her company to not hide behind his poker face, but that look of sorrow tugged at her heart.

Angel pushed away a small twinge of jealousy at what she knew to be the cause of the Captain's sorrow. She knew that he loved Demon so much that he dreaded telling her that her bike, the gift he had given her, was wrecked. It wasn't the bike he felt sorry about, so much as the prospect of hurting his wife, of disappointing her. Angel knew that Matt would do almost anything to avoid upsetting Demon, and Angel felt the same way. She hated the thought that her sister would suffer because she and Matt had been careless when having a little fun.

The young witch sighed deeply. She was very tired. Carrying the bike back to the ledge had taken more out of her than she was willing to admit, and what she now planned would cost her most of the little energy she had left. Angel lifted herself from the floor and moved to stand next to Gideon. She laid her hand gently on his arm to attract his attention and smiled up at him as he looked round.

"Don't worry. Demon needn't ever find out about the accident. I'll call Lily, and let her know we're on our way. We can use a regenerator to fix the bumps and bruises and then you can take a vibe shower there. Lily will loan you one of John's T-shirts and then you can go home to Demon, looking as if nothing has ever happened."

Gideon smiled down at her. "Thanks, Angel, that'll work for today, but I'll still have to explain this," he gestured at the damaged bike, "before Deborah comes up here next."

Angel shook her head, "No, you won't." She reached out and laid her hand on the bike, closing her eyes and whispering under her breath. The power of the spell she used drained her last energy reserves, and

her knees started to buckle. She became aware of strong arms around her, supporting her, holding her to a naked chest that smelled so good. For just one moment, Angel allowed herself to relax, silencing the nagging inner voice. For one moment, she let herself feel the full pleasure of being held in Matt's arms, of resting her head against his shoulder.

She felt the gentle touch of Matt's lips against her forehead as he held her and whispered, "I'll never be able to thank you enough, Angel."

Angel looked up into Matt's face, his gentle, grateful smile almost bringing tears to her eyes. She opened her mouth to speak, but before any words could emerge, she was silenced by his mouth descending on hers. This time the kiss was gentle, lingering, soft but passionate, holding all the promise of pleasure and love that Angel knew could never be hers. Not from this man, no matter how much she wanted him, or how much he wanted her, because this was her sister's husband.

When they finally broke the kiss, Gideon gently released Angel and smiled at her. They turned together and gazed at Demon's bike, straight, clean, sparkling as if newly painted, not a single dent to be seen on the fire-engine red body. Even the back wheel was now in place, all nuts properly tightened.

Gideon shook his head and turned to look at Angel. "Don't tell me. Magic."

Angel's smile was mischievous as she nodded.

Gideon stood at the door to his quarters and braced himself. A quick glance reassured him that there were no outward signs of the accident left on his body or clothes. Lily had given him a regenerator that he had used on himself everywhere he could reach, then he'd given it back to her to use on his back. Lily had placed a gentle kiss on one deep scratch there before laughing at him and telling him to take better care of himself in future.

Angel had watched them both, laughing as she took the regenerator and ran it over her own bumps and bruises. A few moments later, Angel had left, standing on tiptoe to kiss Gideon quickly on the cheek in thanks for her ride. Gideon smiled softly to himself, as he remembered catching her hand, as she was about to leave. As Angel had looked at him, her bright blue eyes serious for once, he had said, quietly, "Thank you, Angel, I owe you. If you can face the prospect again, any time you want a ride, just ask." He'd been rewarded by the happiest smile he'd seen on Angel's face since the accident, and then she had run from the room.

When Lily had brought one of John's black T-shirts to him as he emerged from the vibe shower, wearing John's robe, Gideon had taken Lily's hand and kissed it gently. At nearly four months into her pregnancy, Lily seemed to glow from inside. Her belly made her condition obvious, and Gideon hadn't been able to resist reaching out to gently stroke the swelling, wondering again if it was his child she carried. When he'd heard a few weeks before that she was pregnant, he'd added up the dates and realized that it was a definite possibility, but Lily had said nothing and Gideon hadn't quite dared to ask.

Lily had reached up to caress his face, then laughed lightly. "Hurry up and get dressed, Matt, then go home before Demon notices you've been gone too long. She's busy writing at the moment and you know how she loses track of time when she's doing that, but she won't wait forever."

Gideon had said nothing, just watched as Lily left the room, then dressed quickly, thinking that

sometime soon he really must find the courage to ask her about the baby. But not today.

So now he stood in the corridor outside his quarters, working at getting his feelings under control. He was *not* going to exude guilt at having kissed one of his wife's sisters and having been kissed by the other. There was no need to feel guilty about the bike, it was fine. Just a little paint job...

The doors opened and he stepped between them, then moved through to his old quarters where Deborah sat at the desk, working. She looked up as he entered and smiled at him, the smile that always made his heart turn over. Gideon reached out and grabbed his wife's hand, pulling her upright, then putting his arms around her and kissing her thoroughly. When he finally released her, Deborah pulled her head back and looked at him quizzically.

"OK, Matthew, what is it? I promise, I'm not snooping, but you don't usually greet me quite so passionately. What's up?"

Gideon pulled Deborah close, letting her feel his arousal. "You know damn well what's up, it always is when you're around."

Deborah laughed and kissed him gently, then pushed him back a little. "Good, but there's something else bothering you. What is it?"

Gideon sighed and played with the black strap of his wife's T-shirt. "I know you like black, but have you ever thought that another color might make a nice change? Red, for example..."

{Chapter 1}

The Witches of Eriadne: Interlude Four D

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