

The Witches of Eriadne: Interlude Four T - Part 1: A Quiet Evening at Home

by The Space Witches



...especially when they can share it with the woman they love.

Chapter 1

4th June 2273

The Magic Flute was playing quietly in the background as I stretched out on the sofa, reading a new translation of Homer's Iliad. It was a story I'd always enjoyed, full of battle, adventure, politics, mystery, treachery and capricious gods. Sounds like the story of my life.

Well, my life before I met my wife, who sat on the sofa with me, her butt nestled between my legs, my free arm around her as she read her own book. Shifting my eyes from the page, I looked at her for a few moments, drinking in what I considered to be one of the most beautiful sights in the universe.

Deborah's profile was toward me, showing her determined chin, her full lips, her long straight nose and her high forehead. Her golden curls were tied back behind her shoulders, leaving her neat ears just peaking out from between the strands of hair. Her beautiful head was set on a long, graceful white neck, which drew my lips almost irresistibly. But for once I did resist, as I saw the frown on my wife's face.

"What's wrong?" I asked quietly.

Deborah turned to look at me, her face shifting into a gentle smile. "What makes you think something's wrong?"

I laughed softly. "You may be the empath around here, but I'm not blind, you know. You've been staring at that book for the last ten minutes without turning a page. So either you've mysteriously lost the ability to read, or you're thinking about something that's distracting you. And to distract you from a book, it must be a mighty serious thought."

Deborah smiled again and closed her book, laying it down carefully on the floor by the sofa, then shifting herself a little so she could lay her head on my shoulder and snuggle against me. I put my own book down, and held her closely, enjoying the warm softness of her body in my arms. I always enjoyed those quiet evenings at home, when Marcus was in bed, the ship was running smoothly, and the only thing I had to worry about was whether to have a glass of single malt whisky or brandy before bed.

The music continued to play in the background as I waited for Deborah to decide whether to talk about her worries. It didn't come as any great surprise when she finally sighed and said, "I'm worried about Angel."

I let out a soft sigh myself. Deborah wasn't the only one who was worried about

her sister. Angel had been battling with misery and despair since my counterpart from another universe, who we'd called Jack Gideon, had escaped from the Excalibur a few weeks before. At one point it had seemed that Jack and Angel might be able to make a future with each other. They had obviously been passionately in love with each other--emphasis very much on the passion!

But things had started to fall apart when I'd received orders to transport Jack to Minbar for questioning, and then he and Angel had fought viciously and painfully about her past with my cursed ancestor, Lucas Buck.

A wave of guilt passed through me as I thought about how much pain the Gideon family had brought to my sister-in-law. Poor Angel had been mistreated badly by Lucas Buck, the ancestor of mine who had escaped from the Apocalypse Box that I used to carry around with me. He had seduced Angel and deceived her into releasing his spirit from the Box where he had been imprisoned, a mistake it seemed she had been paying for ever since. She had suffered again when I had called security to arrest her on Mars, and on other occasions when my stupidity had led me to say and do hurtful things. I suppose it was inevitable that Angel would suffer yet again at the hands of my own alter from another universe. Was there no end to the damage I would do the poor girl?

Deborah looked up abruptly, and raised her fingers to tap against my forehead. "Stop it! You have nothing to feel guilty about. It wasn't you who hurt Angel, it was Jack. Stop blaming yourself for his actions. Blame him if you must, although I don't think anyone is really to blame."

I pulled Deborah back into my arms and kissed her, saying quietly, "I know I'm not Jack and he's not me, but I still feel responsible for bringing him into Angel's life. I should have locked him in the brig from the start then none of this would have happened."

Deborah laid her head against my shoulder again and sighed. "Hindsight is so easy, isn't it? Maybe I shouldn't have encouraged them to be together. But it just seemed so right at the time. It was a way Angel could have the man she's always loved, and a way to help Jack heal from his terrible experiences in his own universe."

I held my silence, not wanting to acknowledge that the man Angel had really always loved was me. I pushed my thoughts away from that dangerous place and considered what Jack had gone through. In his universe, he hadn't found the cure for the Drakh plague. Earth had died cursing his name, and he's lost every friend he'd ever had in the war that followed. When he arrived in our universe he lost the little he had left, his ship and even his name. I gave silent thanks that I

hadn't suffered his fate. Such a small thing had bent our paths apart. A small difference in timing that had saved my universe and damned his.

Pushing those dark thoughts to the back of my mind, I kissed my wife's forehead again and said, "Your intentions were good."

Deborah sighed and replied, "Yes, but we know which road is paved with good intentions, don't we? Perhaps I should have tried harder to make him stay. I don't have the powers I used to, but maybe I could have calmed him enough to make him reconsider. Maybe..."

*I stopped Deborah's words with a kiss, then pulled back and smiled sadly at her. "Now *you* stop it. Jack and I may not be identical, but we're close enough for me to know that wouldn't have worked. He'd have just resented you for trying to manipulate him. When you helped him, you did the right thing."*

I had eventually got over the jealousy that had made me doubt my wife's motivations in helping Jack escape, and come to realize that she'd acted for the best. Sheridan had been relieved that Jack was gone, and the worst he could do to me was a mild, half-hearted reprimand for not taking more precautions to secure the prisoner. If Deborah hadn't pre-empted my own plan for getting Jack away, I could have been in much more serious trouble. I'd been willing to risk that to ensure Angel's happiness, but it had all come to nothing in the end.

The music in the background moved on to the beautiful aria sung by the Queen of the Night, and our quarters were filled with the amazing vocal gymnastics of the singer as she shifted from note to note, ranging up and down the scales with liquid ease. I held my wife closely as we each thought our own thoughts, allowing the music to fill the silence between us.

Eventually I felt Deborah shudder gently in my arms, and I realized she was crying. So quietly she was almost silent, but her stifled sobs made her body vibrate against me. I pulled her head up so I could look at her tear stained face and wipe her cheeks. I said nothing, just kissed her gently and looked at her.

After a moment, she swallowed and whispered, "Why can't I protect her, Matthew? I promised I would. I stood by her mother's grave and swore that I'd keep her from harm, but I keep failing. Again and again, I've let Angel get hurt. By David, by the Vorlons, by Lucas, by Ursa, and now by Jack. I'm useless to her. Why can't I be a better sister?"

I pulled Deborah back into my arms and kissed her, telling her over and over that she was the best sister anyone could ever have. That she was kind and

considerate, caring and loving. That Angel loved her and she would never think she was useless. And all the time I wondered who the hell David was. I knew that would have to wait for another time, as Deborah began to respond to my kisses and caresses, and soon enough we ended up making love.

I lay back in our bed with Deborah asleep in my arms. She had her head on my shoulder and was letting out that tiny snore that tells me she's deeply asleep. That meant I could give free rein to my feelings without having to worry.

As usual, guilt was high on my emotional agenda. I'd spent as much time as I could with Angel since Jack had left, but I sometimes wondered if I was doing more harm than good. Was I just a constant reminder to her of what she'd lost? I'd wanted to give Angel the same comfort and consolation she'd given me the previous year when Deborah had been so deeply depressed, but I'd told myself that the last thing Angel needed was me making love to her. Much as the sight of her tears acted as an aphrodisiac on me, I had held back. I would never betray my wife that way again.

So what good had I done in the weeks since Jack had left? Should I just stay away? I knew that Luke was spending time with Angel, trying to help her through her pain, and also that Angel's counsellor, Catherine, was helping her, too. I decided that I should leave Angel's healing to the professionals, and just make it clear to her that I would always be there if she needed me.

Looking down at my sleeping wife, I told myself again how lucky I was. Deborah understood and accepted the feelings Angel and I had for each other. She wasn't jealous as I would have been, although she'd made it clear that if I ever even so much as looked at another woman that way, she'd have my balls for breakfast. I smiled as I looked down at Deborah again and gently kissed the top of her head.

Ever since Jack had come through the rift in space from his universe, I had been constantly reminding myself how fortunate I was. I had a family I adored and a job I loved. I was going to give up that job to keep my family safe and secure, but I knew that everything was going to work out OK. We would go back to Earth and build a new life for ourselves. Angel needed a fresh start, and the best way I could help her now was to give her that. Giving her a secure home on Earth where she could build a new life was the best thing I could do for her.

There was also the fact that Deborah and Marcus needed a safe home, away from the battles and risks of life in space. I had decided to give that to my family, and then Deborah and I would start another baby. We would build a

stable home for our beautiful new daughter and our handsome son, and it would be wonderful. As long as Deborah was by my side, I would be happy.

Sometimes I wish I had a little of Lily's gift of precognition. If I'd been able to see some of the future, maybe I wouldn't have been so stupidly smug.

The Witches of Eriadne: Interlude Four T

{Part 1: A Quiet Evening at Home} {Part 2: Avalon}