

The Witches of Eriadne: Something Wicked this Way Comes - Part 1: The Gathering

by The Space Witches



What's wrong with this picture?

Chapter 1

Mid - July 2276

Gideon lay sprawled on the sofa in his study, watching TV. There was nothing much on, but he watched anyway, flicking from channel to channel, desperately trying to find something to fend off the boredom that filled his life. He had nowhere to go, nothing to do, no purpose in his life, no goals, nothing. His life was a vacuum, and he drifted from day to day, wondering how he'd got into this state.

The inane chatter from a shopping channel created aural wallpaper for his brain, and his eyes fell out of focus as his mind drifted. Gideon found it increasingly difficult to concentrate on anything these days. He tried to read, but lost track of the plot, and books were a sore subject anyway. They were the things that had taken his wife away from him.

Deborah now lived a different life, away from home on book signing tours, publicity appearances, meetings with her publisher, her agent, the producers who were turning her first novel into a movie. Gideon had tried to accompany her on some of her early trips, but he'd been called 'Mr. Montgomery' one time too many by some sycophantic gopher. In the seven years since he had led the successful search for the cure to the Drakh plague, it seemed that the media had forgotten what he looked like, and he found himself resenting that fact. After the blazing row that had followed the journalist calling him by the wrong name, he and Deborah had agreed that it would be best if he stayed at home with the children.

The problem was that he had nothing to do at home. They had employed a nanny during the time when they were traveling, and she took care of Mattie. She resented Gideon's interference if he tried to do too much for his daughter, apparently believing that he was looking for an excuse to dismiss her as unnecessary, now he was at home all the time. Marcus was at boarding school from Monday to Friday each week, and he loved it there. Gideon only had to drive him to school on a Monday morning and collect him on Friday evening. Recently he'd even failed to do that.

The aimless drifting of his life had led to his sleep patterns becoming disrupted. He napped during the day, drank increasingly heavily in the evening, stayed up most of the night watching TV, and then couldn't wake in the morning. For the last three weeks the nanny, Charlotte, had driven Marcus to school when she'd been unable to wake his father. Gideon sometimes wondered if she'd even tried. Perhaps Charlotte's taking on the role of children's driver was an attempt to make herself more indispensable.

Gideon knew he should try to pull himself together, to find some new purpose in his life, but somehow it was all too much effort. It was easier to drift.

A quiet voice from the doorway of his study roused Gideon from his doze. "Hello. I called from the hall but you didn't answer."

Gideon swung himself up on the sofa and turned to see his wife standing in the doorway. He took in her smart, black business suit, the open jacket of which revealed a tight T-shirt that emphasized her breasts. The straight skirt stopped just above her knees, and he could see that she was wearing black, sheer stockings and low heels. Her hair was tied back, leaving little blonde curls cascading around her face.

[She never dresses like that for me.] The thought took him by surprise, as did the surge of

resentment that accompanied it.

"I didn't hear you. I thought you weren't coming home until Friday." Gideon was all too aware of how his own scruffy dishevelment contrasted with his wife's cool elegance. He hadn't shaved for days, and didn't remember showering recently, either. The floor by his sofa was strewn with empty cans of beer, and his T-shirt was stained. He knew he looked a mess, but he'd intended to clean up before she got home. If she saw him like this, it was her own fault for coming home early.

"It *is* Friday. Charlotte's not here, so I guess she's gone to pick up Marcus and she's taken Mattie with her." Deborah's voice was quiet and completely devoid of emotion, but Gideon was sure she was annoyed with him. She didn't ask him to do much around the house, but it seemed he couldn't even do something as simple as collecting his son from school any more.

"Sorry. I lost track." Even to himself, Gideon sounded like a petulant schoolboy. He found himself resenting his wife for making him feel guilty.

Deborah moved silently across the room and sat on the sofa next to him, taking his hand in hers and squeezing it gently. Gideon looked down and saw how her skirt had ridden up slightly, displaying more of her long legs. Did she realize that happened when she sat? Was it intentional? And for whose benefit was she putting on that show? Not for him, that was for sure. They hadn't slept together for months, hadn't made love, hadn't even kissed in all that time.

For the first time, Gideon began to wonder if Deborah was seeking pleasure elsewhere. Did she have a lover for whom she wore her silk stockings? Gideon quickly suppressed the anger and resentment that built inside him at the thought. He'd become good at that over the years, and he knew Deborah found it hard to read his emotions now. Her empathic powers had never totally recovered after Galen's near fatal attack on her over two years before.

"Matthew, what's wrong? Please, tell me what I can do to help." Her voice was cool and emotionless as always, and Gideon knew she was just going through the motions. She didn't love him any more. How could she? Why would any woman love the wreck he had become?

He pulled his hand free and shook his head. "There's nothing wrong. I'm fine. I just lost track of the days. It's easy when they're all the same. I don't have your busy schedule, so I don't need to keep track."

Standing abruptly, Gideon started to move away, but Deborah reached up and held onto his arm. Her voice was still quiet and calm as she said, "Nothing is as important to me as you and the children. I'll give it all up tomorrow if that's what you want."

Gideon turned and looked down at her, almost sneering. "Yes, I'm sure you would. Then you'd be able to blame me when you get bored and you miss the high life. Not a chance. You won't trick me like that."

He pulled his arm away and stormed out of the room, wondering who had just spoken to Deborah like that. It wasn't the Matthew Gideon he used to know. It wasn't a Matthew Gideon he liked very much. It certainly wasn't a Matthew Gideon whom Deborah could love.

Arriving at the guest bathroom, Gideon slammed the door behind him and leaned against it.

He closed his eyes for a moment, trying to pull himself together. Straightening up, he told himself to take a shower, shave, and put on some clean clothes. Maybe that would help him get back to being the person he used to be. Maybe that would help him become someone his wife could love. A small voice inside him told him it wouldn't be that easy. The small voice told him it was too late. He'd already driven her away.

Demon held herself under control until she arrived in her shielded bedroom, carefully closing the door behind her. Only then did she allow her storm of emotions to overwhelm her. Throwing herself on the bed, the tall blonde muffled her sobs in a pillow, knowing that the telepathic shielding might prevent her broadcasting her feelings around the house, but it wouldn't stop Matthew hearing her screams.

She asked herself the same questions over and over. When exactly had Matthew stopped loving her? When had he ceased to care? What had she done to drive him away? What could she have done differently? How could she have kept his love?

Demon wished she'd never written that first book, never listened to the urgings of her friends and family--including Matthew--to send it to a publisher. She wished she'd never signed the contract, never agreed to the public appearances. She should never have allowed herself to become anything but the wife and mother she'd been on the Excalibur. They'd been happy together then, and Matthew had still loved her. That was the only thing that really mattered to Demon, and it was the thing she'd lost. Her husband didn't love her any more.

When her tears finally subsided, Demon pushed herself up on the bed and wiped her eyes. She went through to the bathroom adjoining her bedroom and splashed cold water onto her face, trying to erase the traces of her misery. Marcus and Mattie would be home soon, and she couldn't allow them to sense her unhappiness. While Mattie didn't have Marcus' empathic powers, she was sensitive to moods, and Marcus would sense his mother's misery instantly if she didn't get herself under control.

Drying her face with a towel, Demon looked into the mirror over the basin. Golden brown eyes stared back at her from a pale face with high cheekbones, a long nose and too firm a chin. Matthew had once thought she was beautiful, but those days were long gone. Demon had always thought he exaggerated, anyway. To her own eyes she wasn't beautiful. She had always known that her sisters were far prettier, but as long as Matthew loved her, it hadn't mattered.

Now she examined her face closely, seeing the fine lines at the corners of her eyes, and she wondered if her age was part of the reason why Matthew had stopped loving her. While she wasn't sure exactly how old she was, Demon knew she was now in her late thirties. She still had the long, slim legs that Matthew had once loved, but her breasts were not as high and firm as they had been, and while the scars from Galen's attack had long since vanished, the internal damage remained. Demon could no longer have children, and she felt less of a woman because of it.

While Matthew had repeatedly assured her that he didn't want more children, Demon sometimes wondered whether it had contributed to him pulling away from her. It hadn't helped that in recent weeks she'd lost weight, worrying about her husband, about their relationship,

and she knew that her collarbones stood out too much to be attractive.

"Face it, woman, you're a wreck. How could he love you, when you look like the witch you are?" Demon almost yelled at her reflection in the mirror.

She grabbed a brush and tried to tidy her unruly blonde curls, but soon gave up the attempt and collapsed into a sobbing heap on the bathroom floor.

Gideon stood with a glass in his hand, swirling around the remains of the Scotch he'd nearly finished, staring into space. Deborah had gone upstairs to spend some time alone with Marcus before he went to bed, leaving her husband to mull over the evening they had just spent together.

They'd both been very calm and polite to each other, putting on a show for their children, but Gideon wondered just how successful they'd been. He'd seen the glances Marcus had given them both. Their son was an empath, and he'd been aware of the tension between his parents, but he'd allowed himself to be distracted by his little sister's charms.

Mattie was a delight as always, chattering merrily, telling her big brother, whom she adored, everything that had happened during the days he'd been away. Her vocabulary was awesome for a child who was still under three, but at times she still struggled to find the words she needed. Marcus had laughed fondly and encouraged his little sister in her storytelling, helping her out when she got stuck for a word. Between them, the two children had more than made up for any silence on the part of their parents.

When Marcus had asked his mother about her week, Deborah had given him a quiet description of her time away from home. Gideon had been startled to hear that she'd appeared on TV again, then remembered that Deborah had told him about it before she'd gone away. He'd promised to record the show for Marcus, but he'd forgotten all about it. Something else to feel guilty about.

Deborah had taken Mattie up to bed soon after dinner, while Gideon and Marcus had played chess. Gideon had discovered long ago that this was the only game it was safe to play with his son. He'd learned not to play poker with Marcus a couple of years before. Trying to bluff an empath didn't work.

Part way through their game, Deborah had joined them and curled up on the sofa with a book, so she wouldn't disturb their concentration. Gideon had no doubt that they presented a picture of domestic bliss. A handsome couple with their good-looking, intelligent son, having a quiet evening at home together. It only showed how deceptive appearances could be.

When Gideon and Marcus had fought each other to a stalemate, Marcus had yawned, wished his parents goodnight, and gone up to bed. Deborah had followed a few minutes later, leaving her husband to pour himself a very large drink, bracing himself for her return.

Demon sat on the edge of her son's bed and brushed the blond curls back from his forehead. Marcus shook his head and protested. "Don't do that. I'm not a baby any more."

Demon smiled. Marcus was now seven years old, and he didn't appreciate being mothered too closely.

"Sorry. Force of habit." She smiled again and pulled the covers up around his chin, tucking him in. Marcus immediately kicked the covers free and grinned back.

Laughing softly, Demon asked him, "Are you looking forward to the summer holidays? I've made sure I'll be home more, so we can spend more time together."

Marcus smiled back, and said, "It will be nice to be home for a few weeks, although I'll miss all my mates from school." He paused and his smile faded. Demon waited in silence, aware that he was mulling something over.

After a few moments, Marcus closed his eyes and sent to her. *[[What's the matter with Dad? He's always sad these days. Is it something I did?]]*

Demon leaned forward and pulled her son into her arms, hugging him fiercely, and sending waves of love and reassurance. *[[It's nothing you've done, and we both love you very much, Marcus. Never think we don't. You and Mattie are the most important people in our lives. Your father isn't very happy at the moment, and I don't really know why. But I'm going to find out, and I'll do my best to make him happy again. OK?]]*

Marcus wriggled free of her hug and nodded seriously. *[[OK.]]* A sad smile spread across his face, and he turned to the bedside table, lifting up the toy that rested there. He offered it to his mother and said, "Maybe Half-Ted can make Dad feel happier? Giving him a hug always makes me feel better."

Demon swallowed the tears that threatened to fall from her eyes and smiled at her son. "That's very kind of you, Marcus. You hang onto Half-Ted for the moment, but I'll tell your father you offered."

Marcus smiled and wriggled down under the covers, pulling his teddy bear against his chest. He left Half-Ted at home, knowing that he'd be teased mercilessly if he took the bear to school, but Marcus was still child enough to like sleeping with his teddy. Demon watched as her son's eyes drooped, and within a few seconds she sensed he was fast asleep. She leaned forward and kissed him gently on the forehead, then braced herself to go downstairs and face Matthew.

The door opened and closed silently, and Deborah moved into the sitting room. She wore the black jeans and sweater she'd changed into when she'd got home, and Gideon realized for the first time that the jeans hung loosely on her. She'd lost weight and he hadn't noticed. Which showed how long it was since he'd seen her naked.

They hadn't slept together for weeks. Gideon had stayed up late, night after night, watching TV into the early hours of the morning until he'd fallen asleep on the sofa. It had become a pattern that he hadn't known how to break. Now he found he was nervous about even entering the bedroom he thought of as Deborah's. It hardly seemed possible that it was a room they had once shared. Even when she was away from home, Gideon still avoided it. Sleeping alone in the bed they had once shared would have been too painful.

Deborah moved across the sitting room and sat next to Gideon, silently reaching out to take his glass from his hand. He watched in surprise as she took a sip of the Scotch. Deborah hated spirits and particularly Scotch. The memory of the eventful evening on board the Excalibur years before, when Deborah had over-indulged in Brevari, brought a fleeting smile to Gideon's lips, but it faltered as his wife handed the glass back to him and said quietly, "Let's go away for a few days. Angel keeps inviting us to stay with her in California. We could go on Monday, after Marcus has gone to school, have a few days over there, and still be back in time to collect him when his summer term ends on Friday."

Gideon raised an eyebrow. "I'd have thought you'd done enough traveling. Why do you want to go away again? And what about Mattie?"

Deborah tried to smile, but it didn't really work. Gideon could sense her underlying nervousness as she said, "Charlotte can take care of Mattie for a couple of days. It would be nice if we could spend some time together, just the two of us. A little vacation time."

Gideon frowned and said, "It might not be easy for us to talk with Angel around. Maybe we should leave it..."

Deborah interrupted before he could complete his sentence. "We need to do this now, Matthew, before things get any worse between us. We don't seem to be able to talk here, with the children around and all the interruptions they cause, so let's get away. Angel isn't at home all the time, and her house is on the beach. We can walk and talk. We have to talk, Matthew. We have to work things out."

Gideon wondered exactly what it was she wanted to work out. A divorce? Was that what she wanted to talk to him about? His stomach turned and he felt sick at the thought that he might have lost her, but somehow he plastered a fake smile on his face as he agreed to her plan. "Sure. Let's take a few days for ourselves and work out where we go from here."

Deborah gave him a wobbly smile, then rose from the sofa. She bent forward, kissing his forehead lightly and whispering, "I love you, Matthew. Whatever happens, I'll always love you."

Gideon watched as she walked to the door, silently questioning what she meant by her words. There had been a time when he'd known that Deborah never lied. Now he feared the worst. When she closed the door to the sitting room behind her, Gideon flung his glass into the fireplace, leaned forward in his seat, dropped his head into his hands, and wondered when his life had gone so badly wrong.

"What's wrong with Matt?" Angel looked questioningly at Demon as she asked.

The tall blonde sighed, not knowing quite how to answer. "Just about everything, Angel."

The journey from England to California had been a nightmare. Their shuttle had been delayed, and while they had waited for the flight to be called, the press had somehow found out that Demon was at the airport. Since the news that her first novel was to be turned into a movie, Demon had become somewhat of a celebrity, and the press loved to take pictures of her. The airport had soon been heaving with journalists, and Demon had sensed Matthew getting more

and more irritated.

The whole fiasco had come to a head when a particularly stupid photographer had called out to Matthew, "Mr. Montgomery! Could you put your arm around your wife for the picture?"

Matthew had snarled, "Gideon! My name's Gideon, not Montgomery. And my wife may have forgotten it, just as you have, but her name is Gideon, too. Or at least it is for as long as we're married."

With that he had stormed off, leaving Demon to deal with the deluge of questions that had followed. She'd never been so grateful to hear her flight called, and had fled toward the shuttle, praying that she would find Matthew on it.

He'd been sitting waiting for her, but she'd been able to sense his anger and resentment. The whole flight had been spent in silence, and even after landing, Matthew had hardly said a word to her. As soon as they'd arrived at Angel's home, he'd flung his bag into a corner of the hall and stormed out of the house, saying he was going for a walk.

Angel steered Demon into the living room, and pushed her down into the sofa there, saying, "Tell me."

The caring and concern in Angel's voice were the last straw for Demon. She lost control and started to weep, unable to speak for a while. After a few seconds, she felt Angel's arms pulling her close, so Demon rested her head on her younger sister's shoulder and cried.

When she finally regained control, she sniffed a few times, swallowed hard and whispered, "I don't think he loves me any more." She started to sob again, and collapsed back into Angel's arms.

Demon knew she had startled her younger sister, who had rarely seen the tall blonde so upset and out of control. When she was able to speak again, she gulped out, "I need your help, Angel. Matthew cares about you. Maybe he'll let you in where he's shutting me out. I've tried to get him to talk, but he won't. He feels worthless and unwanted, and he won't listen to me. He just shuts me out. I've tried asking him if his unhappiness has anything to do with my job taking me away from home, I've even offered to give it up, but he won't listen. I'm losing him, Angel, but I don't know how to stop it."

"Matthew loves you, more than anything! He'd never leave you!" Angel sounded outraged at the very idea of what Demon had told her.

"A year ago, I believed that, but now...now, I don't know. He's gotten too good at blocking me out. I can't tell what he's feeling any more." Demon paused before continuing in a whisper, "Please, just find out what's going on, Angel. Do whatever you have to, but convince him that whatever doubts he's having about himself just aren't true. Make him happy."

They continued to talk, with Demon pouring out her heart, telling her sister everything. Eventually they fell silent, and Demon became aware of just how much time had gone by. Matthew hadn't come back, and she began to wonder if he would. Perhaps he'd already made the decision to leave. Perhaps what had happened at the airport had finally been too much for him.

Demon made a decision. Her presence here could only make things worse. If Matthew came back, he should have the time to talk to Angel alone. Maybe Angel could convince him where she had failed. It was clutching at straws, but it was Demon's only hope. Standing abruptly, she announced her intention to leave.

"If he still loves me, he'll come home. If he doesn't..." Demon's voice faltered and Angel hugged her, telling her forcefully that Matthew still loved her. Demon wished she could believe her younger sister. She grabbed her bag and left, sure that her marriage was over.

Angel stood on the deck of her beach house and waited for Matthew to return. His absence had given the sisters a chance to talk, but Angel had to admit she wasn't looking forward to him returning and finding that his wife had left without saying goodbye. A part of Angel hoped that her brother-in-law would get pissed off, and that he would show it. It would give her a reason to read him the riot act.

Angel sighed and chastised herself. Demon had asked her for her help, not for her to engage in one of her infamous arguments with Matt. As she was busy telling herself that, Angel saw him approaching the house. When he reached the stairs, she told herself to be calm and rational and find out what was bothering him. He joined her on the deck, and she smiled and asked, "Did you enjoy your walk?"

Matt nodded, "Yes, I did, thanks."

For a moment neither said anything. Angel knew it wasn't her imagination. There was something very much awry with her brother in law. Demon was right, he wasn't happy.

"Where's Deborah?" he asked.

Angel's stomach knotted before she replied softly, "She left."

As soon as her words were out, she saw Gideon tense. "Had to rush back to work, did she? So much for a little vacation time."

If Angel hadn't heard the pain in Gideon's voice, she might have been angry at his reaction. Instead she felt sorry for him, but it didn't stop her from being honest. "No. Actually, Matt, she left because of you."

"Ah, so it was a need to get away from me then," muttered Gideon.

Angel shook her head in annoyance. "Don't be an asshole, Matthew!" She could see his anger flare, but she quickly held up her hand to silence him. "I'm not here to fight with you, Matt. I want to help. Demon left to give us a chance to talk,"

A muscle in Gideon's jaw jumped as he gritted his teeth. "And what does Deborah think we have to talk about that warrants her leaving without saying goodbye?"

Angel answered, saying pointedly. "I think you know what, Matt."

When Gideon remained silent, staring out across the beach and not looking at her, Angel

reached out her hand and pulling on his arm, forced him to turn. "Matt, what is going on? Why are you withdrawing from your wife and pushing her away?"

The ferocity with which Gideon pulled free of Angel's hand took her by surprise, as much as his suddenly yelling, "Me pushing her away? I'm the one losing her! Deborah's withdrawing from me!"

The two stood for a moment staring at each other. Gideon was breathing hard and seemed as taken aback by his outburst as Angel did. Angel was the first to recover as she asked softly, "What makes you say that, Matt?"

Gideon sighed and Angel watched his shoulders slump as all fight went out of him. "She's always away, Angel. I wouldn't mind her career, her success. I'd cheer her on, if I didn't think she was using it as an excuse to get away from me."

Angel frowned, unable to figure out how Gideon could think that. "Matt, what gave you that idea? My sister loves you so much that it's agony for her being separated from you, even for a day!"

"I'm not the man she fell in love with," explained Gideon.

He looked so sad, it nearly broke Angel's heart. "Oh Matt, that's not true!"

"Isn't it? I don't do anything, Angel!" Gideon ran his hands through his hair and sighed again before continuing. "I don't feel as if I'm contributing anything anymore. I used to be a man of action, now I'm a man of nothing. I'm boring, Angel. I'm so dull I even bore myself. It's not surprising if Deborah has started to lose interest. Why would any woman be interested in me? Did you know it's been weeks since we made love? We used to make love every day, but now..." Gideon's voice faded away.

Angel was too stunned to say anything. She couldn't believe that this was what Gideon really felt. But she was starting to understand where he was coming from. He'd lost faith in his ability to please Demon, to keep her interested and excited. He actually believed that he was no longer attractive to his wife. If she hadn't seen it with her own eyes and heard it with her own ears, Angel might have laughed. Matthew Gideon boring? Unattractive?

Some of what Demon had said came to mind. *'Do whatever you have to, but convince him that whatever doubts he's having about himself just aren't true. Make him happy.'* Angel mulled those words over. Her stomach turned nervously and she could feel her pulse quicken. She knew what needed to be done. She reached out and took hold of Matt's hand. As he looked at her questioningly, she said quietly, "Let's go inside."

Angel led Gideon into the house. She could feel his hesitation as she led him up the stairs to her bedroom. When they reached the door she felt him resist. "Angel, what are you do..."

She turned and placed a finger on his lips to silence him, then led him all the way into her bedroom before turning back to face him, her hands trembling slightly as she reached out to caress his face gently. When Gideon's eyes met hers she smiled, "How could you ever think that any woman wouldn't find you desirable?"

Before he could answer, Angel moved up against him, rubbing her hips against him. She heard

his sharp intake of breath as she brushed against his crotch.

"Angel..." he began, his voice unsure.

She silenced him by pulling his head down and kissing him, thrusting her hips against him. He gasped, allowing her access to his mouth. Her tongue slipped inside the warm interior, finding his tongue with her own, and coaxing it to respond. Gideon moaned and she felt his tongue entwine willingly with hers. But before the kiss could deepen further, he pulled away, his breathing ragged. "Angel, we can't do this! I'm having enough problems with Deborah as it is!"

"It's because of the problems you're having with Demon that we *can* do this, Matt. You have it in your head that because you're no longer the big galactic hero, that you're not attractive to Demon or any other woman. I'm going to prove that you couldn't be more wrong."

Angel watched as Gideon's expression hardened. "Oh, so this is some kind of mercy fuck?"

Angel let that remark wash over her. She wasn't going to indulge his self-pity. Instead, she walked up to him and grabbed him through his jeans and began to fondle his crotch. She smiled lasciviously as she looked up him and said seductively. "There is no such thing as a mercy fuck when it comes to you, Captain. And I'm going to prove it to you. You're still one of the most desirable, sexy and exciting men I've ever known."

Lifting her hand from where she had been fondling him, Angel placed both hands on Gideon's chest, and used her telekinesis to help her push him back onto the bed. He let out a small cry of surprise as she pounced on him and pinned him down. Her hands slipped under his T-shirt, and she leaned forward to claim his mouth in a bruising kiss that silenced any protest.

As her hands worked their way up from his stomach to his chest, Angel's movement pulled up Gideon's T-Shirt, exposing his bare skin. When her fingers brushed against his aroused nipples, she broke the kiss and began to work her lips down his neck, shifting her position astride him so that she could claim his nipple with her mouth. She flicked her tongue over the nub, causing Gideon to moan loudly, before she closed her mouth around it and began to suck gently. As she sucked, she lowered her hips and thrust down against the growing bulge in Gideon's jeans, teasing him into hardening further.

"Oh god, Angel! What are you doing to me?" ground out Gideon. He lay back on the bed, unmoving, not fighting her, but not co-operating either.

Angel lifted her head and grinned up at him, her voice thick and husky as she answered, "I'm just making a point." She wriggled her hips against him, and moved her body until she was laying full length on top of him, her face inches from his. She laughed softly as his eyes closed and he moaned again.

Kissing him again, Angel's tongue plunged deep into the warm haven of his mouth. She savored the taste of him, her own heat and arousal rising. It had been a long time since she'd been able to taste him like this. He was an aphrodisiac. [How could he ever doubt the effect he has on a woman?] Wondered Angel, as she deepened the kiss, wanting more of him.

Feeling hands pulling gently on her hair, Angel broke away from Gideon's mouth and looked down into his golden eyes, now darkened by passion. She trembled as he brought one hand

around to brush his thumb across her cheek. "Do you really want me, Angel? Or are you just doing this because you feel sorry for me?"

"I really want you, Matt. I've always wanted you, and I've always wanted to make love to you. That's the truth."

Gideon was silent for a moment before he nodded, "I believe you...but what about Deborah? I need to know."

"She asked me to help in whatever way I could. She didn't say 'sleep with my husband', but this is the only way I can prove to you that you are wanted in every way. Demon wants you like this, Matt, but right now you can't seem to believe it. Maybe you will once I'm finished with you..." Angel paused and narrowed her eyes as she gazed down at Gideon, still lying motionless beneath her. After a moment's silence, she whispered, "Now shut up and make love to me. Unless you don't want me?"

She grinned as she raised the stakes by reaching between them to fondle his jean-clad erection. From his intake of breath she could tell the sensation of her hand rubbing the fabric against his arousal was almost unbearable.

"I've never stopped wanting you!" growled Gideon, and he began to strip Angel out of her clothes.

"Can we do that again?" asked Angel, as she nipped Gideon's shoulder playfully.

Gideon roared with laughter. "Are you trying to kill me? We've done it twice in the last hour. At least give me a couple of hours to recover. I'm not as young as I used to be, you know."

Angel sat up and arched up an eyebrow. "What's the matter, Captain? Can't you keep up?" She looked down at his limp cock, then back up at his face, her grin a challenge.

Gideon snorted and grabbed her, throwing her down beside him. "I'll show you just who can't keep it up!"

They made love for the third time. When they were finished, Gideon drew Angel against him. It didn't take either of them long to fall asleep, both satisfied and utterly exhausted.

Angel moved off the bed, careful to not wake her lover. She stood and put on a robe, then watched him sleep. She smiled to herself, thinking that he was still one of the most gorgeous, sexy, and attractive men she knew. How could he ever doubt that Demon felt that way, too? It was a puzzle Angel hoped she had started to solve.

Turning, she left the room, deciding that she'd let him sleep for a little longer before she told him to go home.

Angel sat outside on the deck, enjoying the cool morning breeze that blew in from the ocean.

Making love with Gideon had been amazing and she hoped that he would no longer be in any doubt that he was still an attractive man, especially sexually. [Who says sex can't solve problems?] Angel's lips quirked into a wry grin. She knew sex could lead to trouble, but she also knew that sometimes it could help solve a problem. Luke had shown her that. When she had been in emotional trouble over Lucas and feeling alone, Luke had been there for her physically. Making love with Luke had healed some wounds and given her the strength to continue rebuilding her life. Then Will Healy had reminded her again, after Michael's death, that physical closeness could help heal the heartbreak of loneliness and despair.

"Morning."

Jumping slightly at Gideon's voice behind her, Angel turned and smiled as she returned his greeting. "Good morning. Did you sleep OK?"

Grinning, he sat down beside her, lightly brushing a strand of hair that had blown across her face before giving her a quick kiss, "You exhausted me last night. I slept like the dead."

Angel laughed and grinned back at him, "I didn't see you putting up much of a fight or resisting the strenuous exercise regime I put you through. In fact, you really seemed to get into it."

"Oh, I got into something all right," teased Gideon, and was rewarded with a punch on the arm. He continued, "And you're a telekinetic. Even if I'd tried to resist, I wouldn't have been able to stop you having your wicked way with me."

"Oh right! Poor, helpless Matthew couldn't do anything to fend off the wicked witch," snorted Angel, good-naturedly. Both started laughing.

When Gideon stopped, his eyes fixed on Angel's, and he said seriously, "I'd never want to fend you off, Angel. Last night was incredible. You were, are, and always will be amazing." He stroked his thumb down Angel's cheek then across her lips, before he leaned in to claim her mouth in a soft, gentle kiss.

For a moment, Angel felt an intense wave of love for him wash over her. Her emotions reminded her just how much she cared for this man. If she could have kept him she would, if it weren't for her sister. It was thoughts of her sister that were now foremost in her mind. Her time with Matthew had been about more than just her own desire for him. Angel knew she had to send him back to Demon. Again.

Angel felt like crying. Since Michael's death, there had been many nights when feelings of loneliness had nearly crippled her. Having Matt with her had for one night fended off those feelings. Had she agreed to Demon's request for reasons other than just helping her sister? Angel still missed Michael terribly. Had last night been about needing a little comfort for herself? It had never entered her head at the time, but now Angel knew the answer. It was yes. She had needed Matthew's presence in her bed as much as he had needed her.

"Hey, you still in there?" Gideon's voice interrupted her introspection.

Angel nodded. "Yes, I'm still in here."

"You look so sad and serious. What's wrong?"

Angel took hold of Gideon's hand and shook her head. "Nothing's wrong."

"Then why the gloomy face?" questioned Gideon softly.

Angel swallowed a lump and smiled, "I was thinking about Michael and that led me to thinking about Demon. It's time for you to go home, Matt, and set things right with your wife."

Gideon stood abruptly and Angel was taken aback by his controlled voice and expression as he said evenly, "I'm not going home."

"What?" asked Angel, also standing.

"Just because you want me, Angel, doesn't mean Deborah feels the same way."

Angel felt like screaming. "What the hell is your problem? Of course she does!"

Gideon didn't say anything he just looked at Angel stubbornly. Feeling her blood start to boil Angel snapped. "Tell me something, Matt. Do you want to lose Demon? Because if that's what you really want, you're going the right way about it."

"I'm not the one..." began Gideon, but Angel cut him off.

"Just shut the hell up!" she yelled. Annoyance flashed in Gideon's eyes, but Angel didn't care as she headed him off angrily. "Don't you dare say a word. You're going to listen to me, Matthew Gideon. I tried to do this the easy way, without fighting you, but clearly you're too damn stubborn and full of self-pity for me to do that!"

"I don't have to listen to this!" Gideon snarled. He turned and marched off into the house. Angel ran after him, and before he could reach the door she forced him to stop, using her power to hold immobile. She marched round to face him.

"Let me go, Angel!"

"Fine, I'll let you go, but only if you promise not to leave. You know I'll be able to stop you if you try," warned Angel.

Gideon finally nodded, his expression stony. Angel wondered if he'd ever forgive her for holding him against his will. She could only hope that eventually he'd understand that she was only doing it to help him. She released her hold, half-expecting him to try to leave, but he remained standing, giving her a dark look. "So what's so damned important that you would actually hold me against my will? "

Angel stared at him incredulously. "What's so important? My god, have you lost your mind? Saving your marriage is what's so damned important!"

"If saving our marriage is so important, then why isn't Deborah here trying to talk to me? Why would she want you to make love to me, to prove she still wants me?" Gideon sounded confused and hurt.

Angel shook her head and prepared herself to tell him some painful truths. "Would you listen to her, Matt? Would you believe her? For God's sake, you've somehow got it into that thick skull of yours that because you're no longer out there saving the universe, Demon doesn't want

you any more! And that's it, isn't it? This is all about the fact that you're bored and feeling useless. Somehow, you see your own value as being in what you do, rather than who you are. Well, if that's the case, stop feeling sorry for yourself and do something about it! I know for a fact that President Sheridan has told you that if you wanted a job working for the ISA, it was there for you. All you have to do is ask."

"My problems with Deborah have nothing to do with me not having a job!" denied Gideon.

"Bullshit," Angel shot back. "That is exactly what's at the root of this stupid and unnecessary behavior of yours! You're feeling insecure about who you are. Because you're having doubts about yourself, you're having doubts about how Demon feels about you. So you're pushing her away. She thinks you don't want her and that you've fallen out of love with her. Do you realize she loves you enough to let you go, if she believes that's what you really want? Even though it would kill her to lose you? If you don't stop feeling sorry for yourself and tell her that you still love her, you're going to drive her away, Matt!"

Angel paused to take in a shaky breath, but she didn't let Gideon get a word in as she ranted on. Her own emotions were now out of control as she desperately tried to make her brother-in-law see some sense.

"You and Demon have something that most people spend their whole lives searching for. You're soul mates, Matt. You're separate halves of a whole. There are people who would give anything for that. Sometimes they get it, just for a moment, then it's gone, and believe me, you don't want to know what that feels like. You've come close to losing Demon three times now. The first time was at your wedding, and it was because of me. I still feel bad about that. The second time was when she found out about the Vorlon inside her. And then she nearly died when Galen attacked her. So just imagine what it would be like if she were *really* gone, Matt!"

Angel paused to let Gideon think on her words for a moment. She could see his expression changing from anger to something else. Fear.

"Please, Matt. Do whatever it takes to keep hold of the woman you love. Do whatever it takes, because trust me, you don't want to know what it feels like to lose the person you love, and know they're never coming back!" Angel's voice cracked and she could feel tears falling down her face.

"Angel, I'm sorry," began Gideon, and it was obvious he realized she was now talking about Michael.

"I don't want you to say sorry to me, Matt! I want you to get back home and do whatever it takes to keep Demon! Please, *whatever* it takes. Don't find out what it's like to have your heart broken so badly that it hurts even to breathe," choked Angel, as a sob caught in her throat.

Gideon looked at Angel, his expression a mix of sadness and sympathy as he admitted softly, "I don't want to lose her, but I think it's too late."

Angel moved closer and whispered fiercely, "It's never too late. Get on the first shuttle home and explain to Demon what's been going on with you, and tell her you love her and never, ever want to lose her." Something inside Angel broke as talking to Gideon about losing Demon opened old wounds. Deep down, she knew she'd never fully recover from losing Michael. She started to

back away. "Don't lose her, Matthew, because if you throw away a dream come true, I'll never forgive you!"

Angel turned and ran from the room.

Demon curled up on the window seat in her bedroom, and tried to concentrate on the book she was reading, but her eyes kept drifting from the page. The night outside the window was dark and blustery, and she could see nothing beyond the lawn below, although she could hear the sound of the waves crashing on the shore beneath the low cliff at the end of the garden. The wind was whipping up the waves, and the combined noise was more welcome to Demon's ears than the silence that had haunted the house for the previous two nights.

Arriving home early on Tuesday morning, Demon had found the house in disarray. It was obvious that the nanny, Charlotte, had hosted an unauthorized party for her friends the night before, thinking that her employers would be gone for days. Demon had quietly but firmly evicted the remaining partygoers, and advised Charlotte that if she left at once, her notice period would be paid in full. The nanny had been gone within the hour, and Demon had been alone in the house with her daughter ever since.

Tuesday evening, English time, had brought a call from Angel in California, advising that Matthew was on his way home. Demon had calculated that he should arrive on Wednesday morning, and had spent half the night making sure the house was spotless, and that it showed no evidence of Charlotte's party. The tall blonde had finally gone to bed, knowing that she wouldn't sleep, as words ran around and around in her head. [Matthew's coming home. He's coming home!]

Wednesday morning had come and gone with no sign of Matthew, and no call. By Wednesday evening, Demon had called Angel, asking if her sister had heard from him. Angel had been shocked that Matthew hadn't returned, but she was unable to explain his absence.

Demon had spent Wednesday night awake again, this time sitting in a chair in the living room, watching the driveway leading to the front of the house, but still Matthew hadn't returned.

Mattie had helped distract Demon during the day on Thursday, as they had played together in the garden, then moved into the house when the clouds had gathered and the summer storm began. Once Mattie was asleep, Demon had more than enough time to reflect on the cause of her husband's continued absence.

[Face it. It's over. He doesn't love you any more. He doesn't want you. Why would he? You can't give him anything he wants or needs. He probably hates you because of what he gave up for you. Let him go.]

It took every bit of Demon's iron control not to break down and weep every time those thoughts crossed her mind, but she reined in her emotions, and put on a happy face for her daughter. She had no idea what she was going to tell Marcus when he came home from school the following day, but she decided to follow one of Angel's favorite bits of advice. [Think about it tomorrow.]

Dragging her eyes away from the darkness outside the window, Demon looked at her book again, but the words blurred. All she could think about was Matthew, and how she had lost him. She went over and over in her head what she could have done differently, what she could have done to keep his love, but she couldn't think of anything.

The opening of the bedroom door startled Demon from her mental meanderings, and she looked up in fright. The noise of the wind and the waves had drowned out the sound of the vehicle coming up the driveway, and her room was at the back of the house, so she hadn't seen the lights.

The figure standing in the doorway set Demon's heart beating fit to burst. It was Matthew. His hair was disheveled by the wind, but he'd had it cut since she'd last seen him, and it fell much more neatly around his ears and neck. It was thick and shiny, and Demon longed to run her fingers through it, tidying it for him.

Matthew wore black jeans with a white shirt buttoned up to the collar, and a short leather jacket. He was everything Demon had ever wanted, and the sight of him made her want to whimper in pain and desire.

He stood in silence, his legs apart and his hands on his hips, as Demon rose from the window seat. She moved slowly because she wasn't sure her legs would hold her up. Standing with one hand holding onto the window frame, she said quietly, "I was getting worried. Angel said you were coming home two days ago."

The minute the words were out of her mouth, Demon wished them unspoken. They sounded like a criticism, and that was not what she'd intended. She'd meant to welcome him home.

Matthew took a step into the room and looked her up and down. Demon wondered what was going through his mind as he scrutinized her so carefully. Was he thinking of the woman he'd met all those years before? Thinking how she'd changed? How she was no longer beautiful? How he didn't love her any more?

Rather than say another wrong thing, Demon remained silent, waiting for her husband to tell her that their marriage was over.

Gideon looked at his wife and decided she was still the most beautiful woman he'd ever known. He wondered if she could ever forgive him. He doubted it. This time he'd probably pushed her too far. Her voice had been calm and controlled as she mentioned her anxiety, and he'd kicked himself for not thinking that she'd worry. Even if she didn't love him any more, he was still the father of her children. Of course she'd be concerned if he went missing for two days.

He said quietly, "I'm sorry, I should have let you know. Angel gave me some things to think about, and there were some other things I needed to do before I came home."

Gideon longed to rush across the room and take Deborah into his arms. She looked pale and tired, and he knew he was responsible. He took a pace forward, noticing how Deborah's knuckles were white where she clung onto the window frame. She looked as if she might fall if she let go.

Deborah nodded in response to his words, then asked quietly, "What did Angel give you to think about?"

Gideon swallowed. This was the difficult bit. "She told me that I needed a job. That I was feeling sorry for myself. She told me that I should pull myself together, and start being the man you married again. She showed me that I could be that man again."

Deborah looked up abruptly at his last words, and Gideon could have kicked himself. That hadn't been what he'd intended to say. Before he could correct himself, Deborah said softly, "How did she..." her words ran down, and the little color she had drained from her face. She turned abruptly to face the window, and raised her hand to halt her husband as he hurriedly stepped forward. "Don't! Give me a moment, please, Matthew. I just need a moment."

Deborah stood staring into the darkness, one hand shaking slightly as it clutched the window frame, the other held flat against the glass as she took several deep breaths. Gideon wondered what she was thinking, and wished she would lose control over her emotions and project them. That way he'd know what she felt. No room for misinterpretation or misunderstanding. He'd be able to feel her feelings. He'd know for sure if there were any vestiges of love left between them.

After a few moments of silence, Deborah started to speak quietly, her voice completely devoid of emotion, her face still turned away as she looked into the darkness.

"I'm glad Angel could help you, Matthew. I'm sorry I couldn't do that for you, but I'm glad she could. I know you've always loved Angel, and she's always loved you, so if Angel can give you what you need, I understand. Go to her. I won't stand in your way. Just be happy. Please, be happy."

Gideon closed his eyes to prevent the tears that threatened to flow from them. He'd lost her. Deborah was sending him away. He started to turn to walk out of the house and out of her life forever, but as he reached the door, he couldn't help but make one last try.

His voice was full of anger and pleading as he turned and yelled at Deborah's back. "Is it that easy? You just tell me to go and that's it? Has what we've had meant so little to you that you can give up on us so easily?"

Deborah turned, and for the first time Gideon saw the tears streaming from her eyes. This time, her voice shook with pain as she whispered, "Easy? This is the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. I've loved you from the day I met you, and I love you even more today than on the day we were married. Because I love you, what matters most to me is your happiness. If I can't make you happy any more and Angel can, then I'll somehow find the strength to let you go, to send you to her, so you can be happy together. And somehow I'll find a way to go on breathing, to go on living with the pain of losing you. I don't know how I'll do that, and I don't know what I can say to the children, but if that's what's best for you, then I'll do it. But don't ever think it's easy!"

By the time Deborah finished, her voice was breaking and her last words came out as hiccups, as she turned back to the window, leaning her head against the pane, sobbing violently.

Gideon strode across the room, grabbed her shoulders and spun her around, pulling her into

his arms and hugging her tightly, kissing her hair, her face, her tear stained cheeks, her lips, anything he could reach.

Deborah sobbed against his shoulder for a moment, then tried to push him away, hiccupping, "Don't pity me! I couldn't stand that. If you're going to leave me, then go!"

Gideon held onto her tightly as she struggled, until she went limp in his arms, and he finally spoke. "I'm not going anywhere. Open your mind and your heart, Deborah. I know your empathic powers aren't as strong as they once were, but when we're this close, I know you can still feel what I'm feeling. Drop your blocks and feel how much I love you. I don't have the words to tell you, so feel it."

Deborah sniffed loudly, then looked up into Gideon's eyes, her face swollen and her eyes puffy with tears. He found that he loved her more than ever when she looked so vulnerable and distraught, as she would never show this face to anyone else. He was the only person she trusted in that way, although he had no idea why she should.

After a few moments of silence, Deborah whispered softly, "Do you really still want me?" She sounded almost childlike in her confusion, and Gideon hugged her tightly, kissing her face again.

"I never stopped wanting you. I've never wanted to hurt you, Deborah, although I seem to keep doing it. I love you, I want you, and nothing will ever change that. I just don't understand why you still want me, after all I've put you through." Gideon stroked her cheek, trying to brush away some of the tears that still flowed freely.

Deborah looked at him, eyes wide as she said softly, "I love you, that's why."

Gideon found that it was answer enough.

Lying in bed with his wife's head on his shoulder, and her long, slim body pressed against his side, Gideon wondered why he'd been so stupid for so long. Deborah had been waiting for him to join her in her bed for weeks, and he'd been dumb enough to sleep on the sofa, when he could have felt her warm softness in his arms any time he'd made the effort to climb the stairs.

[Dumb, Matt. Really, really dumb,] Gideon rebuked himself.

He asked himself why he had been stupid enough to think that she didn't want him any more. She'd told him again and again that she still loved him, but he hadn't believed her. Was it just because Deborah had allowed her new career to take her away from home? At first she had always wanted her husband to go with her. It was only when he had become irritated with the stupidity of the people who surrounded her that Deborah had agreed to his suggestion that he should stay at home with the children.

In hindsight, Gideon wondered exactly what had caused his irritation. Was it just the shallowness and sycophancy of the PR people and publicists? Or was it that they hadn't recognized him, had treated him as just Deborah's husband, as an afterthought. They hadn't appreciated that they were dealing with Matthew Gideon, Galactic Hero and Savior of the Human Race.

[That's pretty pathetic, Matt. You nearly let your marriage be destroyed by jealousy. You nearly lost Deborah because you couldn't cope with her being more famous than you.]

The wave of self-contempt that accompanied the thought attracted Deborah's attention. She looked up at him, her eyes full of concern. Taking a deep breath, Gideon inhaled the scent of her hair, running his hand over her shoulders and down her back, trying to distract her as he said, "Why didn't you come downstairs and drag me up here? You know I can never resist you."

Deborah pushed herself upright, kneeling on the bed beside him. She smiled down at him sadly and said, "I didn't think you wanted me any more. I couldn't face the thought that you might reject me."

Gideon reached up and stroked her cheek, shaking his head. "That's never going to happen." He pulled her back to him, whispering over and over how much he loved her, and how beautiful she was, as she rested quietly in his arms.

After a few moments of silence, he laughed quietly. "If anyone needs to worry about rejection, it's me. I'll be fifty in a couple of months, I've got gray hairs, and I've been drinking too much. My belly isn't quite as firm and as flat as you've always liked it."

Deborah chuckled softly, rolling on to her side, and propping her head on one elbow while she looked down at him. She ran her free hand down his flank, grasping a small layer of flesh gently between her fingers. "Maybe we can think of an exercise regime to help you lose these love handles."

Gideon laughed and slapped her hand away, delighted that she was teasing him again. He'd missed Deborah's humor as much as he'd missed holding her in his arms. When she snuggled down against his side again, he slipped his arm around her shoulders again, holding her close in a companionable silence.

"So where did you go after you left Angel?" Deborah's question roused Gideon from a light doze. He sighed deeply, and decided this was as good a time to tell her as any. He just hoped his news wouldn't drive her away again.

"I went to the ISA Consulate in New York. It took me a day and a half to get a video appointment with Sheridan, but I got through in the end. Angel was right. I need a job. So I asked Sheridan if he might have something for me. I hope that's OK with you." Gideon mentally crossed his fingers. If this part of his news went well, he'd somehow find the nerve to tell her the rest.

Deborah kissed his shoulder and nodded. "Yes, of course it's OK. Whatever makes you happy, Matthew. I told you that."

Gideon hugged her again, hoping that his next words wouldn't destroy their newfound contentment. "The thing is, I have to go away for a while. Sheridan has asked me to go to Minbar, so he can discuss a potential new assignment with me. I need to be there in early September." Pulling Deborah's chin up so he could see her face, and her reaction, he asked, "Is there any chance you'll get a break in your schedule and you can come with me?"

Deborah smiled and Gideon felt as if a great weight had been lifted from him.

"Of course I'll come with you. I cancelled all my appointments and bookings when I got back from Angel's. I decided then that if you came back to me, I never wanted to be away from you again, and if you didn't come back, none of it mattered anyway." She went on to explain how and why she had dismissed the nanny when she had returned, and how she had called her agent to tell him she was withdrawing from public life. "Danny wasn't very pleased at first, but I told him that if he wanted another book, he'd better give me time to write it. He soon came around to the idea."

Gideon couldn't believe his good fortune. For the first time since arriving home, he really began to believe that they could make a future together. A small part of him nagged guiltily, [So you can only make it work if you have your job, but she gives up hers? That's not exactly fair, is it?] He told the nagging voice to shut up. If it worked and they were both happy, did it matter? The nagging voice yelled back, [Of course it matters! Hypocrite!]

"Matthew?" The worried tone of Deborah's voice roused Gideon from his guilty reverie. He looked down to see her frowning up at him, and he could feel her concern.

Gideon kissed his wife gently on the forehead, sighed deeply, and told her what he'd been thinking. When he finished, Deborah smiled sadly at him.

"It does seem that we can't be happy living the way we have been. But as long as I have you and the children, and the time to write, I really don't want all the rest. I hated all the publicity stuff nearly as much as you did. It's no great sacrifice to give it up, honestly. You are far more important to me than any job."

Trying to decide what he'd done to get so lucky, Gideon hugged his wife again. He wondered what he could do to show her how much he appreciated her. Then an idea occurred to him, and a lazy smile spread across his face.

"Deborah, I know you've been avoiding mentioning my fiftieth birthday, and god knows, I haven't wanted to think about it much, but I guess we ought to acknowledge it in some way. What if we went on a small vacation after the trip to Minbar? We could take Marcus out of school as long as they agree the trip is educational, and I'm sure we can swing that. And just to make it a real party, I'll call John, and see if he can get some time off to join us, with Luke and Lily. Then if Angel can join us too..."

Before he could finish, Deborah had sat up abruptly, pushing him onto his back and staring down at him, her golden brown eyes dancing with pleasure and a smile of sheer joy spread across her face. "Yes! Oh yes, Matthew, that would be wonderful!" Her smile turned mischievous as she went on, "And luckily for you, Ilas and her family are out on the Rim at the moment, so there's no chance of me asking them to join us."

Gideon laughed. Deborah knew that his antipathy toward Max Eilerson had deepened into disgust after the events that had taken place on Cygnus 36, and the two men had not healed their rift in the years that had passed since. Gideon's idea of a vacation would never have included the Martian linguist.

Deborah laughed as she went on, "Where should we go? Where would be a good place for us all to meet up?"

Gideon reached up and pulled her down into his arms again, kissing her long and deep. When they finally broke for breath, he said quietly, "I made a promise to you nearly seven years ago, and maybe it's time I kept it. Let's go back to Eriadne."

Demon froze in Matthew's arms, her mind racing. Eriadne. Her home for six years of her life. Demon could barely remember the woman she had been when she lived there. It seemed hardly possible that there had been a time when she hadn't been a wife and mother, that there had been a time when she had been happy without Matthew in her life.

Memories flooded back of all the happy times she had shared with her sisters on Eriadne. She refused to let herself think about the year they had spent under the control of the Vorlons, being experimented on, developing their powers. That wasn't the real Eriadne. The real Eriadne was the castle and the library, the pool and the waterfall, the orchards and fields, but most of all the people.

Which brought Demon to the memory that still caused her pain. Nikarran. Her friend, who had died on Mars, trying to take care of Angel, carrying out the task Demon had asked him to perform. The sense of loss and guilt she felt when she thought of Nikarran was still strong. The thought of facing Nikarran's daughter, Ranikir, after all these years wasn't easy. Demon had called her when she had first heard the news of Nikarran's death, and the two women had wept together for the father and friend they had lost. Perhaps it was now time to face Ranikir in person.

Sensing that Matthew was growing concerned at her long silence, Demon looked up at him and smiled. "That would be wonderful, Matthew. Yes, let's go back to Eriadne."

{Chapter 1} {[Chapter 2](#)} {[Chapter 3](#)}

The Witches of Eriadne: Something Wicked this Way Comes

{[Part 1: The Gathering](#)} {[Part 2: Persuasion](#)} {[Part 3: Divisions](#)} {[Part 4: Regrets](#)} {[Part 5: Finale](#)}