



Visit [www.wraithsandworlds.com](http://www.wraithsandworlds.com)

© 2007/2008 Darrin Wilson. All Rights Reserved.

## Episode Six: Deacon's Secret

BLUE SPEARS of light flicked across fantastic carvings of demonic faces and angelic beings that framed the entranceway to the temple ahead. Grace looked upward to the immensely high cavern roof and saw the source of the strange illumination: glowworms. Millions of them. Burning bright with the cold radiance of sapphire. Walking together, Deacon stumbled occasionally but Grace quickly steadied him with a strong arm and sure grip. "Glad you haven't lost your strength," Deacon said.

"I've lost a lot of things since my arrival," she lamented, "but I feel stronger than ever."

Again, an icy wind moved past and dissipated into the remote corners of the cavern's depths behind them. "That wind is definitely coming from in there," she said. "It has to be a way out."

"C'mon," he replied. "If we move quickly, the Veonissics will not be able to follow."

"Why not?"

"Because they can neither see nor smell, and their psychic senses only have a very short range. If we can keep ahead of them, we should be fine."

"What the hell are they?"

"Later," he said. "We have to keep moving."

Cautiously, the pair crossed the boundary through the stone archway into darkness and stopped. Grace halted. "I can't see. It's absolutely black."

"Alright," he reassured her. "Stop here."

Several seconds passed. Deacon squinted. "Look there."

"What?"

"Up ahead," he said. "See it?"

"I can't see anything."

"The blue light deceives your retinas. Give your eyes a moment to adjust to the dark."

Several more seconds passed before she was taken by surprise, “Ohh. Yes. Is that... what is that?”

“Daylight. It’s a way out.”

Not a powerful surrounding blue glow like outside, but several beams of light shot downward like pillars directly ahead of them. Inside the beams were gently falling snowflakes making the phenomena appear peaceful, welcoming.

It quickly became apparent the chamber they were in was vast with a low ceiling. Grace tried to discern walls but couldn’t. Only darkness fell back bolstered by only the claustrophobic stone ceiling and a floor. Both utterly covered in a complex language she did not recognize immediately.

“What do you think it all says?” she asked Deacon, who was now hobbling around independently, trying to shake off the pain.

“Not exactly sure. Maybe prayers. Or warnings.”

“Hey! I’ve seen that sign before.” She was pointing at a symbol on the floor just ahead. “And there’s another one. It looks like Hindu. No. Wait. This is Newari. It’s very close to Hindu.”

“Newari? What country’s that?”

“Nepal.”

“Nepal? You can read it?”

“I can converse. I’ve been to Tibet. I’ve backpacked around Katmandu. And look at that!”

She sprung over to a large stone pillar etched with the same congested markings. She placed her palms on the pillar and pushed. The pillar slowly rotated under her strength with a thick grating sound.

“This is a prayer wheel,” she grunted. “I don’t believe it. This is a monastery. The plane. This place. This is Tibet isn’t it?”

He laughed. “And I suppose we were chased by Tibetan monks?”

“I don’t know what they were. But I think you should tell me. Before we go any further. You called them Veonissics. I’ve never heard that word before.”

“*No one’s* ever heard that word before. I heard it from the pilgrims that went away across the ice. I think we all heard it for the first time then. This isn’t Tibet. And we’re no longer human.”

Grace embraced the pillar. “What are they?”

“They’re demons. Wraiths. Creatures that move faster than anything I’ve ever seen.”

“From what I saw, it looked like an octopus. But that doesn’t make sense. An octopus on land. In this cold?”

“No, they’re not octopi. Do you believe in monsters?”

“No,” Grace responded. “I don’t.”

“Maybe you should,” he said, making his way around the pillar. “Both the past and present are full of them. Always have been. It’s just that we’ve never

lived where they've lived—beneath the sea; hidden in rainforests; deep underground. The remote corners of the world hold some of the most grotesque things your imagination can ever dream up. All real. All God's creatures. Just hidden from our sight. That's what the Veonissics are. Just another one of God's creatures. Predators actually. Monstrous only to us."

Grace regarded him carefully. Her voice hardened. "Where did that plane come from, Deacon?"

"I don't know. I honestly don't know. I didn't think inanimate objects could cross over but maybe I'm wrong. I don't know."

She just looked at him. "Am I in some kind of coma? Is this just a bad dream?"

Deacon marched toward her. "Grace," he said gripping her shoulders and shaking her. "Why don't you wake up! We can't be killed. This place is freezing cold. Men, women, and children materialize up on the ice cap every second. The sky looks different. The mountains look different. The place has creatures no one's ever seen before. That last thing every one of us remembers is some version of death. I don't know about you, but it sounds like some kind of afterlife to me. Look. I know you have no reason to trust me. I understand. I would feel the same way after what you've experienced. But more has happened to you and I in the last few hours than has happened to me in the whole time I've been here. That plane is a huge step forward in trying to understand what this place really is."

"What do you mean? You said it's the afterlife."

"This is the afterlife. Of that I'm positive. We're here. In this place, like so many others. It's just what kind of afterlife it is that's bothering me."

"What're you talking about?"

"Where is everybody, Grace? What kind of afterlife kills you after you get here?"

::

"We can't travel on foot," Sand said. "The desert is too big. And rebels are everywhere."

"I'm afraid we have no choice," Abigail said.

The driver turned the key but nothing happened.

One of the henchmen opened the Escalade door and cautiously stepped outside. After he was sure there was no movement coming from the scattered bodies around him, he went around to the front of the car. "Pop the hood."

He raised it up and peered inside. Scorpions, dozens of them, were pulling and snipping at the wires.

"Both cars have the same problem," Abigail said.

The henchman dropped the hood in disgust, walked back around and leaned inside the cabin. "The engine's infested with scorpions. It's toast."

"Then we walk," Sand said.

The henchman protested. "We have no cover."

Abigail just gazed aimlessly out the window. "We won't need it."

The midday sun cooked the ground on which they walked. Out here on the high desert, the humidity was lower but the heat much higher. Sand exhaled quickly and took in a deep breath through his nose. He knew that by breathing through your nose you were less likely to dehydrate. He stepped carefully onto a stretch of sand and momentarily lost his balance as it gave way.

"Watch your step," Abigail said from just ahead. She was in her wheelchair being pushed by one of Sand's goons. She had no way of knowing he staggered.

"Just keep your mind on the path ahead," Sand said. "Don't worry about me."

"Don't worry. I'm not," she said.

The five of them walked. Sand, the three goons and Abigail. Sand took out a deer hide water satchel, unscrewed the top and took a swig. He handed the satchel off to one of his henchmen. "Give this to her," he said. The henchman received the satchel, was about to pass it along but paused. He took a quick gulp and was unceremoniously swatted in the back of the head by Sand. "Not you!" he said. "Wait your turn. Give it to Abigail." Clearly annoyed, the henchman nevertheless obeyed and handed the satchel to her. "Thank you, young man," she replied simply.

"Abigail," Sand said, "any more rebel fighters in front of us?"

"Not in front of us," she said. "Behind us. And to the east."

"Just keep moving," he said.

Her wheelchair slid across the sandy canyon floor, pushed by powerful hands. The chair rocked and lilted as it traversed uneven ground. They were heading to a narrow parting of the rock. It would take them out of harm's way out of the Devil's Needle. That's where they had to go.

The gap was dark and tapered. Single file they sauntered through; Abigail first, one henchman, then Sand and the remaining two, armed and cautious.

As they exited back into open air, Abigail indicated for the convoy to halt.

"What's the matter?" Sand asked. "What's wrong? Why have we stopped?"

The man pushing her wheelchair glanced back and shrugged his shoulders.

"What's wrong?" Sand said, making his way up to her.

Stretched out in front of them was a barren and waterless vista. She appeared to be scanning the landscape. Sun-baked dunes and arroyos shot out

in all directions. Flat except for a distant mountain range miles off toward the horizon.

“We’re going to die,” breathed one of Sand’s henchmen.

“Abigail,” Sand said.

“Give me a minute.”

Sand was flustered. “Are you changing your mind?”

“No. I said give me a minute, please.”

“This is bullshit,” one henchman said clearly.

Sand turned to him. “You will give her the respect she deserves. All of this we’re doing now is worth much more than your life. So if you want the rest of your money, I recommend you suck it up. And do as you’re told.”

“What’s the use of any money if we’re all vulture food in the middle of the fucking desert?”

The larger man shifted his semi-automatic to his other arm and spoke up, “Not to mention sitting ducks if we’re out in the open.”

Abigail pointed away into the distance. “Your village is there. On the other side of those mountains.”

Sand smiled. “Good. Let’s get started.”

The larger man voiced what all the others were thinking. “What if she’s wrong?”

“If any of you want to turn back now you may do so,” Sand said. “I will take Abigail myself. But if you stay, as of this moment I am tripling your fees. All of you.”

Another henchman chimed in, “We got that in writing, old man?”

“Think of how your mother will benefit, Roger,” Abigail said. “Your guilt has haunted you ever since you deserted her all those years ago and now you have returned only to find she is sick. All of the money you will gain from this will buy her the medication she needs. That has been your plan all along. It is unfortunate you have chosen to accompany a madman for this money. But who am I to judge?”

Sand raised an eyebrow at his henchman.

“How did you know that?” Roger asked. “How could you’ve known that?”

“There are a great many things I know about you, Roger. And anyone else that happens to share my proximity for any length of time.”

The larger henchman backed away subconsciously.

“Not so fast, Mr. Hinel,” Abigail said. “Your childhood abuser was killed in a car accident two years ago in Muncie, Indiana. You can at least let go of some of your anger.”

“Jesus Christ,” said the only henchman not to be examined by Abigail’s psychic tentacles.

Sand just smiled. “If there are no further questions, we will be on our way.”

The five of them set out toward the mountains. Each of them praying, in their own manner, for an escape from their own private hell.

::

“We need to keep moving,” Deacon said.

“I know you’ve been very kind to me thus far,” she commented. “But you’re still asking a lot.”

“I know. But if we trust each other, maybe we can find peace... and your father. That’s all I want. To eventually find God and understand what’s happened. Your father will be a very pleasant bonus.”

“If you want me to trust you, I need to understand a few things first. For starters; why does Maru hate you so much? Is it really because he’s a zealot? Or is it something else you’re not telling me?”

“Maru’s a criminal. And an unstable one at that. At least he was when he was alive. That’s my understanding. And that means you’re dealing with an irrational mind. But he found the cave and provided shelter for all of us. On the other side there can be no loyalties. You must go where you’re safest.”

“Every man woman and child for themselves?”

“I haven’t seen anything that could foster security of any kind. At least not yet.”

“So I should take your help with a grain of salt?”

“We can help each other. But if you’re more comfortable not trusting me, I won’t be offended. I want to find peace as well as you. But Maru’s path would not lead to peace. I’d much rather accompany you than him.”

“Well,” Grace said, approaching him. “At least that sounds honest. I’m going to find my father—if he’s even here. But if I feel in the slightest way that you’re not being honest with me, I’ll leave you. I’d rather muddle through this thing alone than end up trusting someone who can’t be trusted. Understand?”

Deacon nodded.

“I want to trust you but trust has to be earned. Baby steps. Now,” she continued, “I’ll believe you about the plane, if you tell me exactly what those things are out there. And spare me the monster stories. ”

“I already told you. To the best of my knowledge they’re just animals. But if you want a more vernacular explanation: they’re evil.”

“I’m listening.”

Deacon lowered his gaze, deep in thought, and paced. “Now, given the biblical definitions of angels and demons in the afterlife, I definitely think they possess the characteristics of a demon. And if this is indeed an anti-matter reality, then these things must be an indigenous species. The fact they have no

fur suggests they're thermogenic, which means they create their own heat. The only other organism I know of that is thermogenic by nature are plants."

"You think these things are plants?"

"I can't answer that for sure. All I know is that they're big, slimy, and run in packs; which could suggest a hive mentality."

Grace thought for a moment. "And a hive suggests a queen."

"Correct. But it's all conjecture. Just guessing at this point."

"Have you ever seen one? A whole one?"

He hesitated. "No."

"You mentioned they were psychic. Why do you think that?"

"Because sometimes I can hear them."

"The clicking."

"No, Grace. I mean, I can hear their thoughts. They're extremely intelligent. They can plan, strategize. They also know things about me."

Grace shook her head. "You're losing me."

"I think it has something to do with the length of time you're here but it seems they can sense your thoughts and recite back to you what you're thinking."

Grace scowled. "You sure you're just not crazy?"

"I believe this place is saturated with psychic instability. Like an earthquake zone except with mental energy. I think everything here is both made of anti-matter *and* psychic to some degree. Including you. You just haven't been here long enough to pick up on it yet."

"Is Maru psychic?"

"Yes, but his blind obsession with God is clouding it. The sense itself is very delicate. It can't be contaminated with anger or rage."

"Does that mean my dad would be psychic too?"

"I think it's a good possibility."

"Then I would be able to contact him? And find out where he is?"

"Perhaps."

Grace inhaled and became hopeful in her own thoughts.

"Grace," Deacon said. "There's one more thing I have to tell you."

She looked at him.

"I have a special knowledge," he said. "One that Maru and the others don't know about."

She frowned, waiting to hear something awful that would force her out on her own. But before he could finish, she suddenly doubled over and yelped in pain.

"Grace!"

She straightened up, then quickly screamed and held her head.

Deacon rushed to her side. "Grace! What's wrong?"

“My head... it’s like somebody just cut my brain in half...”  
“Oh God. Look at me.”  
“Wait, it’s fading,” she said quickly, still doubled over and breathing heavily.  
“It’s gone. What’s wrong with me?”  
Deacon held her up. “Okay. Walk with me. Slowly.”  
They sauntered about the chamber, Deacon supporting her. “It’s gone,” she said. “No pain. Like it never happened. What’s going on?”  
“Just walk with me a little bit more. Breathe. You’ll be okay.”  
*Grace.*  
“Yes?” she replied.  
“What?” Deacon asked.  
“Did you say my name?” she said.  
“When? Just now?”  
“Yes, just now.”  
“No.”  
“Yes. You did.”  
“No I didn’t.”  
*Grace.*  
She clearly saw that it wasn’t Deacon. “What? Who was that?” she barked.  
“Who was who?” Deacon said.  
“I’m hearing my name. In my head. I’m hearing—”  
*Grace. My dear child. Finally. I’ve found you. Do not worry. I’m with you now. I won’t let you go. But you must listen to me very carefully.*  
“Oh my God,” Grace said. “It’s Abigail. It’s my aunt Abigail.”

Coming Soon:  
**EPISODE SEVEN:**  
**CORNERED BY FATE**