

Excerpt

Bridge to the Past
Moonseed Trilogy, Book 1

By Judith Ingram

This excerpt takes place in the hospital, right after Katherine has awakened in Victoria's body and sees her husband, Ryan, for the first time.

April sunshine splashed across the linoleum and warmed Ryan's shoes where he stood, rooted in place, staring at the impossibly beautiful woman in the starched bed. Although neither spoke, the emotional charge running between them held him stunned—his eyes locked on hers, his breath quick and shallow. The woman tilted her head and slanted her green eyes at him, a smile playing at the corners of her mouth. He licked his lips and felt a pulse jump in his throat. His palms slid unaware over the rough wool of his trousers, wiping moisture.

Ryan cleared his throat and rocked back on his heels. Hands in his pockets, he came alongside the bed and stood over his wife, hating the telltale flush he could feel rising from the open collar of his shirt.

"Your mother called this morning with the good news," he said. "I was stunned, Vicki. Tell me how it happened."

She slid her eyes from his face to his neck, where he felt a muscle jerking. The corner of her mouth lifted, but she merely spread her hands and shrugged. His heart sank as he realized that she still could not speak, and her gesture of helplessness roused his old protective instincts. But the hint of laughter in her eyes held him back, along with the glint of something else—something he'd never seen in her eyes before.

He spoke again, making his voice gruff to cover his uneasiness.

"You look better this morning. Rested. In fact, you're . . . God, you look beautiful." He hadn't meant to say it quite like that. He pulled his hands from his pockets and gripped the bed rail. "I'm sorry. I can't have lunch with you at Eleanor's today. I have to catch a one-thirty flight to Phoenix. But I'll be back on Friday, as planned."

The laughter in her eyes died instantly, and Ryan was startled to see them clouding with disappointment. Unmistakably disappointment. He had expected relief or, at best, indifference.

His hands came loose from the bed rail and gently cupped her face. "I promise I'll be back

before you even know I'm gone," he said, stroking her cheeks with his thumbs. She stared up at him with emerald eyes that seemed to widen and deepen, pulling his gaze inside her and drawing his head down until, without meaning to, he was covering her mouth with his.

His senses abandoned him to a swirling emerald sea. Dimly, he felt her slender arms slip around his neck, pulling him deeper into the kiss. He groaned and dug his fingers into her hair, lifting her head off the pillow as his need sharpened into a tight visceral tug. Her lips parted against his, and her breath, light and sweet, slipped into his mouth. She was moaning softly.

"Excuse me." A throat cleared itself noisily. Ryan realized on some level that this was not the first time the voice had spoken. He fought his way clear of the rushing green tide and opened his eyes. The room tilted; he let his wife go and clutched the bed rail for support, swinging his head toward the voice and growling: "Well? What is it?"

A young student nurse stood at the door, visibly embarrassed. "I'm so sorry. But it's . . . I'm supposed to get Mrs. Ashton ready to go home."

Shaken and reddening, Ryan managed a civil nod. "Give us a moment, will you?"

The girl scurried away.

His wife lay exactly as he had released her—blonde hair tumbling over the pillow, head tilted, lips parted. Her breath was light and fast, lifting her breasts under the thin cotton of her hospital gown. An image flicked across his mind of their bodies tangling on the narrow hospital bed, and Ryan took a step back, stunned by the unexpected force of his need.

"I'll . . . uh—" His voice shook, and her mouth curled with lazy satisfaction, like a cat licking cream from her whiskers. "I'll see you on Friday, Vicki." He ached to touch her again, but he didn't dare. Instead, he took another step back. "Till Friday."

She was still smiling when he made his escape into the corridor.