

The Witches of Eriadne: Interlude One - Part 1: Sharing

by [The Space Witches](#)



John Matheson and Luke Raven by Lilith

Chapter 1

Dureena was walking towards Medbay when someone called her name. She stopped and turned around, seeing John Matheson walk towards her. She smiled at him. "Also on your way to the Doctor's good-bye party?"

He avoided her eyes and said, "Actually ... I wanted to ask you to tell Dr. Raven ... that I wish him all the best for his future, and that I regret not being able to join the party." He looked at her, his face a mask, and suddenly Dureena noticed that he didn't look very good, as if he hadn't been sleeping well – or much.

"John ... what's wrong?" she asked, concern in her voice.

He shook his head. "Nothing, I just need some time for myself ... the strain of having to constantly block others gets to me sometimes."

Dureena sensed that this was only half the truth, but didn't dare to question him further. "Should I tell the Doctor to come? Maybe ..."

"NO."

Dureena almost jumped at his harsh reaction.

John took a deep breath, then said, "Listen, I'm sorry ... but there's nothing he could do. I just need some time on my own, to get my head clear, OK? Will you give him my message?"

Dureena shrugged, not happy. "OK."

John gave her a nod and left quickly, giving Dureena the impression of a man on the run.

"Get well soon," she called after him, not sure if he had even heard her.

Medbay was rather crowded when she arrived. All of the medical staff was there, and Dureena could see Max and Gideon talking with Luke Raven. She braced herself and walked over.

"By the way, where's John? Do you have him working an extra shift?" she heard Luke ask Gideon.

"No, I don't," Gideon said, looking around. That wasn't like his XO at all, to be late to a friend's party. [Especially Raven's.] He had never asked them about it, but since the two had been with the redhead, Lilith, at Eriadne B, there seemed to be a special bond between them. He couldn't say he felt entirely comfortable about it, but he had never interfered with his crew's private lives, and didn't plan to start now.

Before Gideon could continue, Dureena cleared her throat. "Actually ... he won't be coming."

Everybody was staring at her. "What do you mean?" Luke asked calmly.

She swallowed. "Well ... I met him on my way here, and ... he asked me to convey his best wishes for your future, and to tell you he couldn't come. He said the stress of constantly blocking others gets to him sometimes, and that he needed some time on his own." Before the Doctor could say anything, she continued, "And he told me you couldn't do anything, so you shouldn't bother to go check on him. He only needs to be alone for a while."

Luke looked taken aback, but he finally nodded. "Well, OK ... Tell him I hope he feels better soon, if you see him."

At that moment the chief nurse called for everybody's attention.

"We're all here to say good-bye to Dr. Luke Raven, and I'm sure I speak in the name of all medical staff if I say it was a pleasure to have him here while Doctor Chambers ..."

Dureena could barely concentrate on the short speech; her mind was occupied. Finally the nurse gave Raven some special, historical medical book as a good-bye present.

Luke cleared his throat and thanked them for the present and for making him feel at home here, and went on to say he'd come back anytime if they needed him. Dureena didn't listen to his words but concentrated on his face, detecting disappointment and sadness beneath a layer of cheerfulness. When he was finished, everybody clapped and then returned to their various discussions they'd been involved in. For a single moment no one was watching, and Luke absently looked off towards the Medbay door, unaware of Dureena's watchful eyes on him.

The party was over, and Luke packed his last things in the Medbay's office. He had already packed his personal things; the bags were waiting in his quarters. In two hours a shuttle would take him to Babylon 5, from where his trip home was already arranged. But his mind was occupied with something else completely.

"Doctor?"

Luke turned around to see Dureena stand in the door. "Yes?"

She bit her lip, then entered and sat down on the desk, looking up at him.

"It's about John ..." Luke flinched slightly, but motioned for her to go on. She took a deep breath, then continued, "I didn't want to mention this in front of the others, but ... when I saw him, he didn't look well to me. I don't think he's slept in days. And I'm not sure he told me the truth about why he didn't come to the party. I know he said you shouldn't go see him, but ... I think you should."

Luke looked at her, trying to gauge the implications of what she had said. "Why?"

Her yellow eyes bore into his for a long second. "Call it female intuition."

Luke had been standing in front of the door to Matheson's quarters for at least two minutes, unsure whether he should ring or not. Finally he decided that since he was already here, he might just as well go on with it. He rang the door chime.

He didn't hear anything, but now that he'd made his mind up he wouldn't give up so fast. He rang again.

Finally he heard a muffled, "Who is it?" from inside the door.

"It's Luke. Let me in, John."

Seconds of silence followed. "You can't do anything. I'm fine, I just need ..."

"No, you're not fine. If you were fine, you'd have come to say good-bye. Now open the damned door!" Luke was surprised by his own vehemence.

"Please Luke, go. You have to pack; your shuttle will leave in an hour."

"I already have. And the shuttle leaves in one and a half hours." Exasperated, Luke put a hand against the door and said calmly, "When we said goodbye, Lily made me promise to be there if you needed me, and you won't make me break that promise."

There was a long silence, but just when Luke wanted to give up, the door opened.

He hesitated a second, then stepped in, standing just inside the door. John was sitting on his couch, wearing slacks and a loose t-shirt. [Dureena was right, he looks as if he hasn't had much sleep the last few days.] It occurred to him that he'd only seen John a handful of times in the last week, and never longer than a few minutes, but he'd attributed that to his own preoccupation with Medbay.

Seeing him now, Luke suspected John had avoided him for some reason. He noticed the glass Matheson was holding in his hands, half-filled with something that looked strong, and the slightly dazed look in his eyes. He'd never seen John drink alcohol during his time on the Excalibur, except once, and even then he'd only had one glass of champagne. [Something's definitely wrong here.]

"Do you want to stand there and stare at me for the rest of the day?" John asked without looking at him.

"If I have to, yes." Luke sat down beside John, but kept his distance because of John's demeanour.
"What's wrong, John?"

John snorted. "Didn't you get my message?"

"Yes I did ... but I believe it as little as its bearer did."

John grimaced, but didn't say anything.

"When did you last have a full night's sleep?" Luke asked.

John made a vague gesture with his hand, the liquid in his glass making waves. "What does it matter to you? You're leaving." He pressed his lips together and looked to the side when he realized he'd spoken with more vehemence than he'd intended to.

Luke stared at him, mind racing and emotions in turmoil. Suddenly John shrank back, holding his head, the glass falling to the floor. "Stop!"

Luke realized that the alcohol must have impaired John's ability to block out other's thoughts and emotions. "John, I'm sorry ..." He touched John's arm, which only caused him to move further away. Luke remembered the stories about touch enhancing a telepath's abilities. [Are they true, then?]

"Please ... just leave me alone," John whispered, wrapping his arms around himself and rocking back and forth slightly. Luke couldn't believe that his friend was behaving like this.

"No. I won't go until you've told me what's wrong with you."

"I told you ..."

Luke grabbed John by his shoulders and shook him. "Don't lie to me. Tell me -- for HER sake, if not for mine or yours! Lily told us to share... truly share, and she didn't mean only happy times!"

John stopped writhing and stared at him for a moment, then went limp, defeated. When Luke let go of him he leaned forward, leaning his arms on his knees, and stared at the opposite wall, collecting his thoughts. Finally he spoke, finding it incredibly hard to say the words. "Over the last few days, while I realized that you ... would leave us soon ... I also realized that it was only ... because you were here ... that I got over leaving Lily behind. Now you're leaving ... and leaving me behind. Alone." John looked at the floor, only able to hold back his tears because he had to concentrate so hard on blocking Luke's emotions, storming in on him.

Luke sank back in the sofa and looked up at the ceiling, barking a short sarcastic laugh. "You know what? I've been dreading going home since we left Eriadne B, and it's become worse every day. It's almost unbearable now ... because I know I'll be alone. Amidst my family and friends I'll be alone." He

closed his eyes and whispered, "I don't want to be alone."

John closed his eyes as Luke's emotions tore down his blocks and washed over him. They felt just like his own.

Luke could feel John shift on the sofa, and then his soft lips on his mouth. Adrenalin surged through his veins, but he didn't dare to move because he feared that John would break the kiss. Only when he felt John's hands touch his face did he wrap his arms around him, opening his mouth and letting his probing tongue in. He felt something wet on his cheek, and opened his eyes. He pushed John back and looked at him, seeing a single tear run down his cheek. He wiped it away, realizing that his eyes were burning too. Inside John's eyes he could see all the loneliness and need for comfort that he felt inside himself. He wished Lily were here... he heard her voice say, "*We have to share... truly share,*" and his eyes widened. "John ... I don't know if you can ... or if the rules allow you to do this, but -- would you share your memories with me?"

John looked at him for what seemed a long time, no need to ask which memories Luke was talking about. Then he said, "If you are willing to let me in, you can share your memories, too ..."

Luke nodded, although the thought of letting someone into his head, literally, was a bit disturbing, even if that person was close to him. "Relax," John murmured, looking into his eyes. After a moment Luke FELT something ... strange. It was like a tickle, a soft touch, somewhere inside his head. John's eyes were closed now, and Luke heard his voice say, "Just relax and let go." He tried, but part of him still resisted, reflexively. Suddenly John kissed him again softly. To Luke's surprise, his emotional and physical reactions were enough of a distraction that John could get in. Luke began to see memories ... but not his own, he realized. He was somewhat surprised to not only see pictures, but to also feel the accompanying emotions. Some part of him had assumed this would be like a movie playing inside his head, but it was much more; he almost couldn't distinguish which were his own memories and which were John's. He closed his eyes, giving himself up to the past.

John was showing him his first glimpse of Lily, when she and Ilas had visited Max and him in the dungeon. He could feel John's surprise and fascination when he woke up to look into a pair of incredibly green eyes, and his arousal when she suddenly kissed him. He noticed an exceptionally strong emotional reaction when John realized that the sisters were going after Gideon, followed by John's slight embarrassment *now* about his discovery, but the flow of memories didn't leave him time to think about it. Luke remembered the moment he had laid eyes on Lily for the first time, when the two crewmen, Dureena and he had been captured. He had fallen for the petite redhead the moment he'd laid eyes on her, but only realized it later, when she had him cornered in the corridor near her room after he'd watched her with John ... That memory still managed to arouse him, and through their mental connection he knew John felt the same. And he knew that their shared memories weren't the only kind of comfort his friend needed.

Luke didn't have to open his eyes when he reached out and drew John nearer; it was as if they were one mind sharing two bodies. He kissed him passionately while his hands wandered under the loose t-shirt John was wearing, and a few seconds later it fell to the floor, followed by Luke's shirt. Soon they were both lying on the couch, stripped naked, holding each other tightly. The memory of their love-making with Lily in the throne room floated up ... but it hadn't been only the two of them sharing Lily, that time. All three of them had shared each other, as Lily had asked them to do, strengthening the special bond that had grown between them during their days on Eriadne B.

Luke stopped John before he could really start to think about getting a lubricant. Without realizing it, instead of speaking he thought, "[I don't care if I can't sit for a month... I don't want to waste a single

moment I could spend with you.]] He could feel that John was hesitant, but also emanated the same urgency as himself, and he gave in quickly. He placed a hand under Luke's knee and pushed it back; Luke followed with his other leg. John's hand started caressing his anus, massaging it gently, probing with his finger. He could feel Luke's excitement build. [[Patience.]] John positioned himself between Luke's legs and pushed his knees towards his chest. When he started pushing inside Luke, he could hear and feel him gasp at the slight pain it caused, but at the same time he was urging him on, so he slowly pushed on, widening the opening with his cock, and soon pleasure added to the pain, and ultimately replaced it. John was inside him to the hilt, and started thrusting in and out slowly, carefully, knowing exactly how hard and fast he could push without hurting him too much, while he steadied himself on his left arm and stroked Luke's erection with his right hand.

Somehow their love-making, while still sharing their memories, seemed to evoke Lily's presence. They could smell her scent, feel her lips kiss them, her hands touch them, her hair tickle their skin. It was almost as if their memories had come alive to join them in this sharing.

Both came with heart-wrenching intensity. John collapsed on Luke's chest, panting heavily. Luke let his hand stroke the soft black hair, remembering the first time he'd done that in Lily's whirlpool. He could feel John's smile inside him. [[Who would have thought when you arrived on the Excalibur ...?]]

Luke chuckled softly. [[I don't regret a single moment.]]

[[Neither do I.]]

Luke felt a caressing mental touch, then John's presence retreated, leaving him to feel strangely alone.

"You'd better go now. The shuttle will be waiting shortly."

Luke took one last look around his quarters to make sure he hadn't forgotten anything, then sighed and turned to Matheson, who was standing beside him at the door. They looked at each other, knowing these were their last private moments. Luke reached up and softly stroked John's cheek, then bent forward and kissed him. It was a gentle, lingering kiss, but finally John broke away. "It's time."

Luke nodded and took one of his bags, while John shouldered the other. No more words were spoken on their way to the landing bay.

They were all there to see him off, including Sarah Chambers, who had arrived a short while after his good-bye party. Even Galen had returned and was standing in line to wish him well. Dureena smiled slightly when she saw John Matheson come in with Luke, carrying one of his bags. He still looked as if he hadn't slept, but his colour and overall appearance had improved visibly. "Well, that headache seems to have gotten better pretty quick," Max murmured, his usual sarcastic self, adding a loud, "Ouch!" when Dureena elbowed him. Her warning glare convinced him it was better to shut up for once.

Gideon shook his hand. "Thanks for everything." He couldn't keep eyes from wandering to Matheson for a moment, but he quickly looked back at the Doctor. "I'm sure you understand if I say I hope we won't need a replacement for Sarah again soon. But if we do, my list only has one name on it."

Raven smiled. "Call me anytime! I think it's safe to say that I never had a more interesting replacement stint than this one."

Sarah gave him a heartfelt smile. "Thank you very much, Doctor Raven. My staff was full of praise for you, and the condition I found Medbay in was almost better than before I left. Should you ever need a recommendation, just let me know."

"I will. Try to keep the stress rate down, Doctor Chambers, and take a break once in a while."

"I will do my best."

Dureena smiled knowingly, and he surprised her by bending down and kissing her on the cheek. "Thanks, Dureena." She overcame her embarrassment after a moment and smiled up at him.

Max flashed one of his famous smiles and shook his hand. "After this, you'll be bored being back in your practice now, I suppose."

Luke shrugged. "They say long-term excitement is bad for your health."

Max grinned at the double meaning. "I'm starting to like you, Doc."

"Well, that would be something new, Maximilian!" Galen said teasingly, then turned to Luke. "Your assistance was greatly appreciated, Doctor. Certain Captains can't seem to keep themselves out of trouble." His blue eyes moved pointedly to Gideon.

"I only did my job," Luke replied. Galen's eyes brushed over John Matheson, who was talking to Sarah Chambers; when they returned to him, they seemed to pierce him. "I'm sure you did."

Luke was saved from the Technomage when Trace Miller walked up to him. "Everything's ready when you are."

Luke nodded. "Thanks," he said, then looked at John who now stood beside him.

"Time to go," the young Lieutenant said in a light tone, covering the sadness he felt inside. Everybody wished Luke the best for his future and a good trip home. He turned around and entered the shuttle, followed by John who still carried his other bag. Trace was already sitting in the pilot's seat, going through a last minute check of the instruments. They put Luke's bags in a storage compartment and stood there awkwardly, both at a loss for words. Then John took something out of his pant's pocket and offered it to Luke. It was a small, emerald green box. Luke looked at him curiously, then took it and opened the lid. Inside, he found a long lock of Lily's curly red hair.

Luke's eyes were wide when he looked back up at John, who smiled and murmured so Trace wouldn't hear, "She gave two of them to me before she left ... one for me, and one for you, which I was to give you just before you went home."

Luke looked down at the lock again, then put the lid back on. "Thanks." There were no words that could convey how much this gesture meant to him, but he knew they weren't necessary anyway.

He checked that Trace wasn't watching, then quickly ruffled John's hair. "Don't forget."

John smiled sadly. "I won't if you don't." Luke nodded at him; both knew that exchange was really

unnecessary, but the words felt comforting, a last acknowledgement of the special bond between them before they were separated. They embraced for a last time, and John left the shuttle, his face a mask.

John could hear the others leave the bay when the shuttle was gone, but he lingered, not ready to confront them yet.

"So, how's your head?" he heard Dureena's voice say. His chest heaved when he took a moment to collect himself, then he turned around and looked down at her. "It's better ... not well, but better, thank you." Suddenly his eyes narrowed, and he said in a low voice, "Can't you just convey a simple message, without adding your comments?"

Dureena's yellow eyes bore into his dark brown. "Would you prefer I'd done that?"

John's facade broke with his smile, and he shook his head. "No, you were right. Thanks, Dureena." He patted her shoulder and left, leaving her smiling at his back.

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