

The Witches of Eriadne: Fire Burn - Part 5: Conditional

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Even when handicapped, Lucas Buck is very resourceful...

Epilogue

Tracy Watson had had a crush on Captain Gideon since the day she was assigned to the Excalibur Medbay at the start of the search for a cure to the Drakh plague. The Captain was a regular visitor to Medbay, talking to Dr. Chambers about what progress they were making, and every time Tracy saw him, her stomach did a small back flip. She loved his dark, brooding good looks, his quirky sense of humor, and the way he'd learned the names of all the medical staff--even hers. On the rare occasions when she'd had an excuse to talk to him, his smile and the way he'd said her name had left her fluttering for days.

Tracy had been devastated when she'd heard that he was having a relationship with Captain Lochley from Babylon 5. If that was the sort of woman who appealed to the Captain, she knew she didn't stand a chance. Lochley was tall and slim, strong featured, heavy in the chest and narrow in the hips. Tracy was small and cuddly, constantly fighting the tendency for weight to settle on her butt. Her best features were large gray eyes and a cloud of thick, soft hair, which unfortunately was a rather mousy brown. As far as she could tell, neither appealed to the Captain. He'd always been pleasant and friendly, but remote.

Her spirits had lifted when the ship's grapevine gave news of his break-up with Lochley, only to have all her hopes dashed after their visit to Eriadne. Tracy had been in Medbay when Gideon had been brought in, barely alive, with burns on his hands and chest, and she had watched as the woman

they'd called Demon had hovered around the Captain's room. For a while, she'd hoped that Demon's attraction to Gideon (understandable as it was) might be one-sided, but when he'd finally regained consciousness, it was obvious he had feelings towards the tall blonde. He had even returned to the planet with her.

After the Excalibur had been refitted and the Captain and his senior team had returned from their second visit to Eriadne, the ship's gossip soon reported the fact that Demon was pregnant with the Captain's child. Tracy began to hate Demon from that moment. She was sure that Gideon had been entrapped and bewitched by the woman who led the band of 'witches' on Eriadne. How could her Captain fall in love with such a woman? She may be tall, blonde, and beautiful, but everyone knew that she had strange powers and she wouldn't have a name like Demon for no reason. Tracy had hoped the Excalibur would never return to Eriadne, and so far her wishes had been fulfilled.

Then a couple of weeks before, the Captain, Lieutenant Matheson, Dr. Chambers, and Mr. Eilerson had all gone off on a mysterious mission, which the grapevine said was a special assignment for President Sheridan. They'd returned over a week later, bringing another man with them, who'd been placed in a secure unit within Medbay.

The first time Tracy saw the man, she couldn't believe her eyes. At first, she'd thought that the Captain had been injured again, and she alternated between horror and elation. Horror that he'd been hurt, but elation that she might get a chance to nurse him while he was in Medbay. She was one of Dr. Chambers' most trusted senior nurses now and would almost certainly be one of those assigned to take care of the Captain. When Gideon had walked into Medbay to check that the man had been adequately secured, Tracy was stunned. The resemblance was amazing, but when she surreptitiously observed the Captain talking to the man, she could see the subtle differences. The prisoner's hair was longer and he looked a little heavier than Gideon did, but they were otherwise identical.

She'd quickly learned that the prisoner's name was Lucas Buck, and that he was accused of murder and would be dropped off at the next Earth colony they came to that had a formal court. In the meantime, he was being kept in a secure Medbay unit while the injury to his back was treated. Tracy was one of the nurses selected to care for him and his injury.

Over the last few days she'd nursed the prisoner, bathed him, and taken care of his most intimate needs, while he was unable to help himself as a result of his paralysis. Tracy had sometimes dreamed of looking after the Captain in this way, and this was the next best thing. At first, she'd been wary of speaking to him, believing what she'd been told about him, that he was a ruthless murderer, but as the days had passed, his resemblance to the Captain and his unfailing charm and good humor had eaten away at her resistance. He'd asked her name when she first tended him, then always used it. The way he said it sent shivers down her spine. His voice was like the Captain's, but with a soft drawl that made it even more attractive.

He always smiled at Tracy when she entered his room and thanked her for whatever help she gave him. He'd been particularly grateful for the treatments she'd applied to his back and neck, to repair the damage to his spinal cord and to ease the stiffness in his neck, when he'd had to lie on his stomach. The memory of the first time he'd taken her hand and gently pressed her fingers to his lips in thanks sent a warm glow to her center.

After two days, the prisoner had improved enough for him to be turned onto his back and he was now able to sit up for short periods. Tracy loved to help him sit up, arranging his pillows to make him as comfortable as possible, knowing that her care and attention was always rewarded with a warm smile and heartfelt thanks. She loved to help him wash, and in particular, she loved to wash his hair, gently

massaging his scalp and running her fingers through his damp hair.

He'd now been in Medbay for a week, and Dr. Chambers was becoming concerned about the lack of progress he was making. While he'd regained some feeling in his legs, he was still unable to move them. Tracy couldn't help but be glad about this. When Lucas was able to walk again, she wouldn't need to spend so much time with him, so she now eagerly anticipated every moment she could spend in his company. He was always so gentle and kind. She couldn't understand how anyone could think he'd committed the crimes of which he was accused. She remembered the first time he'd reached up and touched her hair, commenting on its softness and beauty, and how he'd noticed her eyes and told her how pretty they were.

Lucas had explained that the so-called 'secret mission' that Gideon and his senior team had embarked on, had in fact been an illicit visit to their women on Eriadne. He'd sworn Tracy to secrecy on this and she hadn't told anyone, but she was appalled that the Captain would leave the Excalibur in such a way, just to indulge his desire for that Demon-witch. Lucas had then told her that he was a relative of Gideon's, which explained their close likeness, and that he'd been visiting Eriadne when the false charges of murder had been made against him.

Tracy had found herself telling Lucas about her feelings towards Gideon, and how she hated Demon. He'd sympathized with her and confirmed her worst fears. Demon had indeed used the powers given to her by the Vorlon to bewitch and manipulate the Captain, who was now totally under her control. It was Demon who had made the false charges against Lucas, which despite a complete lack of evidence, Gideon was pursuing.

Lucas watched as Tracy voice-keyed the lock to his room in Medbay. He'd been working on her from the moment he arrived. Charming her, subtly seducing her, setting her against Gideon, encouraging her resentment of the Captain's relationship with Demon. The little nurse he'd mentally nicknamed Nurse Tubby was almost ready for his next move. Lucas found her company dull, her physical attractions minimal and her appetite for sentiment and romance nauseating. He closed his eyes for a moment and thought of Angel, his Angel, wondering where she was and what she was doing. He was amazed to discover that he was actually concerned for her well-being. Angel was a real woman, stunningly beautiful, with a body made for sex and a fiery temperament he loved to dominate--not the timid, plump little mouse now entering his room. But that was fine, Lucas could manipulate a mouse more easily. He gave her his sexiest smile, the one that warmed his eyes and made women want nothing more than to do whatever he wanted.

"Hello, Tracy, darlin'. How's my favorite nurse today? You're a sight for sore eyes and solace for a lonely man. Just what the doctor should have ordered but didn't." He watched as she flushed unattractively, splotches of red appearing on her face. Lucas smiled again. "I love it when you blush, darlin'. You know how pretty it makes you look and how those pink cheeks set off those beautiful eyes of yours." He reached out for her hand and gently kissed her palm, carefully placing his fingers so he could feel her pulse accelerate and gently probing her thoughts as he touched her. He could feel her melting under his attentions, warm with passion and lust, which she interpreted as love. Lucas knew plenty about passion, but 'love' was something he'd only learned about from watching others. He didn't rate it highly. It made people stupid, but stupid was just what he wanted Nurse Tubby to be.

He allowed Tracy to minister to his needs, and rolled onto his stomach, so she could treat his back. He could feel her lingering lovingly over his broad shoulders and the place where the knife wound had pretty much healed. Lucas had regained the use of his legs two days earlier, but was keeping quiet

about it for the moment, insisting that while he could feel sensations, he had no motor control as of yet. He knew that if he admitted to being able to walk, the security on his room would be increased. He might even be moved to the brig and would get no more loving attention from Nurse Tubby, who was going to be his ticket off the Excalibur.

When she'd finished his treatment, Lucas begged Tracy to stay with him, telling her that he was lonely and how much he enjoyed her company. He played on her sympathy for him, as she knew that he'd been denied access to the computer system, depriving him of all sources of entertainment. She perched on the edge of his bed, keeping alert for Dr. Chambers, ready to run if she were seen. Lucas encouraged Tracy to talk about herself, no matter how boring he found her, already knowing what little there was to know about her from probing her mind. He listened as she prattled on about the mission, and how close they were to finding a cure. [As if I give a damn.]

Lucas allowed his eyes to drift away from her, and after a while, sighed mournfully. Tracy noticed at once. "What is it, Lucas? Are you in pain? Can I get you anything?"

He smiled sorrowfully at her and again lifted her hand to his lips. "It's nothing, Tracy. I'm fine. You do too much for me already, and I don't want to get you into trouble."

He watched as she flushed again and felt her squeeze his hand. Tracy's palms were slightly damp and felt cold under his touch. It made Lucas think of a frog and her large, prominent eyes added to the likeness. He was damned sure that this was one frog that wouldn't turn into a princess when kissed.

"Oh, Lucas, I love to do things for you, and I know that you'd never get me into trouble. What's the matter?"

Lucas sighed again and explained his fear that as soon as he recovered the use of his legs, he would be moved to the brig. "And I can't bear that thought. The idea of not being able to see you every day, darlin'... well, it torments me." He kissed her hand again and squeezed it tight. "There's so little time left before I'll be taken away and tried for a crime I didn't commit. That damned woman, Demon, hates me because I didn't fall for her charms in the way your Captain did, and she'll do anything to get her revenge. Gideon is so bewitched by her that he can't see through her lies."

He looked up at the nurse sitting next to him on the bed and smiled ruefully again. "But I don't blame Captain Gideon. He can't help himself; she has him totally under her control, and I know how it feels to be bewitched by a beautiful woman." Lucas looked down at their hands, entwined by his side and did his best to look distressed. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. There's no hope of us ever being together, so I shouldn't have told you how I feel about you. Just forget it. Pretend I never said a word." Lucas chewed his lip to stop himself laughing.

When he looked up at Tracy again, he could see that the red splotches had now spread to her neck while her prominent eyes had filled with tears. She whispered, "Oh, Lucas, I had no idea. I never dreamed that you could feel the same way for me as I feel for you."

Lucas chewed his lip even harder, torn between laughter and nausea. "I should never have told you. We can never be together. As long as I'm a prisoner, unjustly accused, we have no future together." He planted the seed in her mind then refused to talk about it further, turning the conversation back to Tracy and her boring life.

Tracy left Medbay for her quarters, feeling as if she were floating on air. [He loves me!] She told herself over and over, but still couldn't bring herself to quite believe it. How could this gorgeous, charming, intelligent, sexy man love someone like her? The Captain had never even noticed her, why should this man be different? Then she thought of all the care and attention she'd given Lucas during the last week, the time they'd spent together, which had allowed him to get to know her properly, to see her gentleness and kindness. Was it so surprising that he'd come to love her? She'd always believed that if only a man would take the time to get to know her, to see past the physical aspects alone, that he would love her, and Lucas had done just that.

As she entered her room, Tracy came down to earth with a bump. What use was there in knowing that he loved her when he would be taken away from her so soon? Gideon would hand Lucas over to the authorities of the next Earth colony they came to and proclaim the false charges that Demon [Bitch!] had made against him. Even if Lucas were cleared of those charges, the Excalibur would be long gone by the time he was free, and Tracy would have no way of getting back to him. She wondered whether she should resign her position and stay with him, providing him with moral support while he went through the ordeal of his trial, being there for him when he was acquitted.

But there was no guarantee that Lucas would be cleared. While Tracy believed him completely when he told her that the charges were false, she had no idea what evidence Demon might have fabricated against him. Given her strange powers, anything was possible. He might be found guilty, and the penalty for that was death of personality. The thought of losing the soul of the man she loved, especially to such an awful fate, reduced Tracy to tears. She couldn't bear to lose him now. She would do whatever it took for them to be together. She started to plan.

Lucas watched as Tracy entered his room carrying his breakfast tray. Another day had passed in which he'd managed to fool Chambers into believing that he was still paralyzed, but he could tell that the doctor was becoming suspicious. And yesterday, Tracy had told him that they would arrive at the Earth Alliance planet, Orion VII, that night, and it was there that he would be dropped off and charged. If he were going to escape, it would have to be soon. He knew that his declaration of love had left Tracy in a fog of hormones, and he planned to use his time with her today to lead her into the idea of helping him escape.

Tracy put the tray down on the table by the bed and having checked to make sure that there was no one watching from the main Medbay, she leaned toward Lucas as he grabbed her hand and pulled her close. It was the first time he'd kissed her, and he put everything into it, disregarding his own distaste in his attempt to overwhelm her. When she finally broke away for a breath, he could see that she had to support herself on the side of the bed. [So far, so good.]

Lucas raised his hand and stroked her cheek. "I'm sorry, Tracy darlin'. I shouldn't have done that, but you look so beautiful today, I just couldn't stop myself. Today will be the last time we can be together. Now I can take the memory of your kiss with me when I leave."

Tracy's eyes filled with tears as she whispered. "Oh Lucas, I can't bear it. I can't let them take you away from me now."

He held out his hand and took hers, squeezing it gently. "We don't have any choice, love. You told me that we'd be jumping back to normal space in a few hours and arriving at Orion VII late tonight. Once we're there..." Lucas dragged his eyes away from Tracy's face and looked down at his hand holding hers.

She leaned forward and kissed him on the cheek. He resisted the temptation to wipe his face and looked up at her as she spoke. "Lucas, I've been thinking," she paused.

[Well, that's a first. Don't strain that brain cell, darlin'. Lose that one, and you'll make a potted plant look smart.] Lucas struggled to keep a suitably mournful expression on his face as Tracy continued in a rush.

"I know the charges against you are false, and it doesn't seem fair that you should have to go through all that just because that bitch hates you. I want to help you escape, but I don't know how. If you could walk, I could get you out of Medbay and down to the landing bay, but I don't know how to fly a shuttle, and as you can't walk, I don't know how..."

Lucas lifted his hand and put his fingers to her lips. "Don't say any more. You'd get into terrible trouble for helping me, and I can't allow that, but I have some news for you. When I woke up this morning, I found that I could move my legs again. It looks like the treatments are working at last. Maybe I could walk after all."

Tracy grabbed his hand and started to kiss each finger in turn, words tumbling from her between kisses. "Oh, Lucas, that's wonderful! I was so frightened for you. I couldn't understand why the treatment wasn't working. You should have had movement back days ago, but if you can walk, then I could get you to the landing bay, but..." Her eyes filled with tears again. "Oh, it's still no use; I can't fly a shuttle."

"But I can." Lucas smiled up at her. During the trip from B5, he'd taken lessons from the Drazi pilot he'd hired, building on the knowledge he'd gained while riding in Gideon's head, to the point where he was now confident that he could handle a shuttle with no difficulty. And Lucas knew all of Gideon's access codes to landing bay security systems. At one point during his transfer from Alwyn's ship to Medbay, the men carrying his stretcher had stumbled and nearly dropped him. Gideon had reached out to steady the stretcher and touched Lucas' shoulder. That was all Lucas had needed to raid the Captain's brain for useful information, including all his security access codes.

Lucas decided that he shouldn't appear too eager. "But I can't let you do this, Tracy. It's too dangerous. If you were caught, I couldn't bear it if they punished you for helping me." He watched as Tracy's face softened and she smiled at his care and concern.

"I'd risk anything to be with you, Lucas. Anything."

[Hook, line, and sinker.] He sighed and squeezed her hand tightly. "Well, I suppose if it's the only way we can be together."

Gideon had decided to stay on the bridge after the end of his normal shift, waiting for their arrival at Orion VII. He planned to speak to the authorities there as soon as he could and arrange for Lucas' immediate transfer.

On his return to the Excalibur a week earlier, Gideon had been met by Lt. Jackson, who welcomed him so enthusiastically that for a moment he thought she was going to kiss him. She'd been fending off inquiries from Earthforce for the previous two days and was getting desperate. She'd dragged him into the nearest conference room and got straight through to the Comms officer to raise a channel to

Headquarters. Jackson had then briefed him rapidly, while they waited for the channel to open.

Gideon had managed to talk his way out of the irritable demands made by HQ as to his whereabouts over the previous few days and as far as he could tell, he and Matheson had got away with their unscheduled and unapproved absence. The main problem had been the backlog of bureaucratic crap that they'd had to clear between them since their return. It had taken the whole week since then to catch up, and he'd just sent Matheson off duty, telling him to go lay down before he fell down.

Alwyn and Chambers had been locked in Medbay together since their return, only emerging to tell him that they needed to work with a control group of infected people. They'd decided to return to Theta 49 to see if Robert Black and his people would be willing to act as such a control. Gideon hated to use the term 'guinea pigs', but knew that's what they were really asking. If they agreed, then he and Chambers would have to create some interesting explanations of their work. They could hardly report the results of their experiments on a group of people who were officially dead.

Theta 49 was not far from Orion VII, one of the earliest Earth colonies that had declared independence from Earth nine years earlier, but Orion VII was still a member of the Earth Alliance. As a result, it had its own independent legal and court system that was based on Earth law, making it the perfect place to off-load the prisoner and have the necessary charges made.

Gideon was studying Chambers' latest progress report, awaiting confirmation that they were in orbit above the main settlement, when Roberts, manning the Sensor station, spoke. "Captain. A shuttle has just left the landing bay and appears to be headed for the planet, but I don't have any record of anyone filing a flight plan."

He looked over at Helm. "Are we in stationary orbit yet?"

The Helm officer looked over his shoulder and shook his head. "No, Sir. Five more minutes to orbital insertion."

Gideon stood and walked forward to look over Roberts' shoulder. "Then what idiot has taken a shuttle out early?"

Roberts blushed slightly as Gideon came to stand behind him. "According to security access codes, um, well, you did, sir."

"What?" Gideon leaned over his shoulder to study the data display on the console. Sure enough, the shuttle was logged out with him as pilot, and his codes had been used to release the shuttle controls and the security doors to the landing bay. [What the hell is going on here?] "Buck!"

He yelled over at the Comms officer. "Open a channel to that shuttle now!" Gideon raised his commlink and quickly keyed Medbay. Chambers answered at once. "Check the unit that Buck is being held in. I think you're missing a patient, Doctor." The Captain worked at keeping his voice level and not letting his fury spill out.

Chambers came back on the line. "You're right. He's gone. The last person to access that room was one of my senior nurses, Tracy Watson. I can't believe that she'd do this..." Her voice trailed off.

"Believe it, Doctor. He needed an accomplice to get out of Medbay, as I don't have security access there. Then somehow he got hold of my security codes and used them to get off the ship. Now I get the chance to shoot the bastard."

Gideon cut the link and turned back to the Comms officer just as she spoke. "Shuttle pilot on the line, Captain. Sound only, he's denying visual access."

Lucas' voice sounded around the bridge. "You wanted me, Batman? What's the matter, Batphone not working today?"

Gideon snarled. "Turn that shuttle around, Buck, or I'll take great pleasure in shooting you out of my sky."

Lucas laughed. "No, I don't think so, Batman. First, you're in orbit above an independent member of the Earth Alliance. I don't think they'd take kindly to you shooting up their sky. And second, you don't want to kill one of your own crew, do you? Nurse Tracy here has been having second thoughts about helping me escape, haven't you, darlin'? But she's still on board. Kill me, and you kill her too. Now say a few words to the nice Captain, Tracy."

Gideon listened as a woman started to cry. He didn't recognize the voice, but remembered Tracy Watson as a mousy little thing who blushed every time he spoke to her. Eventually, coherent words emerged from the sobs. "I'm so sorry, Captain. He told me he loved me. He said we'd be together. Oh, what have I done? I've been so stupid! Please, Captain, I'm sorry. Let me come back. Make him bring me back."

The Captain could only speculate as to what Lucas had done to cause her such distress, but he was sure that it hadn't been pleasant. He watched the screen and could see that with each passing moment, the shuttle was getting further away. It was now close to the atmosphere and had been aligned for descent. Gideon turned to the Comms officer and gestured for her to cut the channel to the shuttle.

"Get two shuttles out there following him, and get me the local law enforcement people on another channel." He turned to Roberts. "Keep tracking that shuttle and feed the data through to the pursuit ships. I want to know exactly where he lands."

He knew that fighters would be quicker to launch and faster in pursuit, but if he sent fighters into Orion VII air space, he'd create a political incident on a scale that even he wasn't willing to risk.

Gideon gestured for the Comms officer to put the channel to the shuttle back up. "This is pointless, Buck. I have shuttles following you and we've alerted the local authorities. You'll be arrested again as soon as you land. Turn that ship around and bring Nurse Watson back, and we won't add kidnapping to the charge sheet." He watched the sensor screen as the shuttle entered the atmosphere, heat shield blazing.

Lucas laughed again. "I'll be long gone by the time your hounds catch up. I just wanted to say goodbye, Batman. I wish I could say it had been nice knowing you, but hell, it was certainly nice *knowing* your woman. Whiplash was something else, nearly as good a ride as her sister, Angel. But you know that, don't you? Make sure you take good care of my son, Batman. I'll be coming for him one day." The channel went dead.

Gideon barely controlled his temper and refrained from throwing the data pad he held at the viewing screen. He didn't want his crew to see that Lucas had rattled him with that final comment. He watched helplessly as the shuttle dropped into the atmosphere, then turned back to Roberts. "Where's he headed?"

Roberts did a quick extrapolation of the course and speed of the shuttle. "Straight for the middle of nowhere. It's just jungle in that area, but he could change course when he gets below the ionosphere and we won't be able to track him. Orion VII has a strong magnetic field that plays havoc with our instruments. It bounces back all our signals. They'll have to track him from the ground, but Captain," he turned in his seat and looked up at Gideon, "the area he's headed for has no major population centers, and it's currently the middle of the night there. I doubt if they'll have the equipment to track him, or even if they do, if anyone will be awake to do it."

Gideon clenched his fists, struggling to contain his anger. He turned back to the Comms officer. "Have you gotten hold of the law down there yet?"

"Yes, Sir."

Gideon spent the next few moments trying to explain to a skeptical law officer that there was a dangerous criminal entering their jurisdiction, holding one of his crew hostage, all the time watching the screen and the sensor image of the shuttle slowly fading from view. By the time he had the authorities convinced that they needed to act, Lucas' shuttle had disappeared off their sensors, lost in a blaze of static. Gideon then took calls from the two pursuit ships that he'd sent out. They stood no chance of catching up and had lost track of the stolen shuttle when it dropped below the ionosphere, so he recalled them.

He paced the bridge, waiting for the law officers from the planet below to contact him, while he tried to figure out what had gone wrong. How the hell had Lucas gotten hold of his security codes? Gideon had known that Lucas had access to all of his knowledge until eight months before when their mental link had been severed, and he'd made damn sure that every access code on the ship had been changed as a result. Gideon had made doubly sure that Lucas couldn't use any of his previous knowledge while he was confined to Medbay, by denying him access to the computer systems. But somehow Lucas had still gotten hold of the latest codes. Not from Tracy Watson, that was for sure. She wouldn't have known Gideon's personal security codes, but somehow Lucas had. Gideon continued to puzzle and curse as he paced the bridge.

When he finally heard back from the law officer, the news was as bad as it could be. As Roberts had feared, there'd been no one in a position to track the shuttle's descent, and they only had the vaguest idea of where Lucas might have landed. They planned to send a search team into the area at first light, but were not hopeful. The region available for Lucas to land in, once he was below the ionosphere, was vast. Even with their best tracking equipment, it could take days just to find the shuttle, assuming that Lucas had taken the time to make some attempt at concealing it, and there were any numbers of small-to medium-size settlements where he could head after landing. Orion VII might be one of the largest Earth colonies, but the population was well spread among a large number of communities and the authorities made few attempts to track their citizens.

Gideon cursed to himself. [How the hell am I going to explain this to Dureena? And how do I protect Deborah and Marcus?] He was uncomfortably aware that they were as much at risk as ever, and that next time, he might not be so lucky as to have an informant willing to tell him what Lucas was planning. The need to find a way to be with the two of them and protect them had just become significantly more urgent.

Lucas fired the PPG rifle at the top of the slope under which he'd brought the shuttle to rest. The shot set off a landslide completely burying the shuttle. He figured that would be sufficient to delay attempts

to trace his landing site, until he'd disappeared.

He stretched to ease the ache in his back while he studied the small pile of supplies he'd taken from the shuttle. Few enough so he could carry them, even with his injured back, but sufficient to get him to the nearest community, which he estimated to be a few hours' walk away. He checked the pockets of the uniform that Tracy had stolen for him, from which he'd removed all insignia. Now it just looked as if he was wearing black pants and a jacket with a blue sweater.

Lucas carried the small supply of credits that Tracy had brought with her and little else. He sighed as he realized that he'd have to start again, building as he'd done on Babylon 5, finding a niche for himself from which he could establish a power base, but he'd done it before, and he could certainly do it again. He decided that he'd wait until he was more firmly established this time before going after his son. It might take a few years, but Lucas could be patient. [Let someone else have the trouble of raising the brat. I'll go get him after he's out of diapers.]

This time, he wouldn't have Angel with him to help him and entertain him while he established himself, but he would manage. Lucas' thoughts strayed briefly in her direction, wondering again if she was the one who'd betrayed him, reluctant to believe it, wishing she were still with him, but he could manage alone. Tracy had suffered a little accident with the airlock during the shuttle's descent, so even if the local authorities found the shuttle, there was no evidence against him. The body would have burned up on its way down.

Lucas picked up the small pack he'd put together and slung it over his shoulder, whistling softly to himself as he set off. 'Brand New Day' had always been one of his favorites.

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The Witches of Eriadne: Fire Burn

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