

The Witches of Eriadne:

Interlude Four R - Part 1: These Sheltering Arms

by *The Space Witches*



Dylan Hunt's ship, the Andromeda.

Chapter 1

December 2272

Angel sighed and lowered her head to the arm of the sofa, banging her head against it in frustration. [I've got to stop this, dammit!].

[Stop what?] Asked her inner voice.

Angel growled in annoyance and shifted in her seat before snapping back, [You know what!] There was dead silence and for a moment the young witch thought it would leave her in peace. The Goddess alone knew she didn't need to be harassed and questioned by herself.

[OK, so I know what the problem is. You're aching after your sister's husband again,] said the voice softly. It wasn't accusing, just honest, but that still irked Angel and this time she spoke aloud as she stood up and started pacing.

"Yeah, and so what if I am? I can't help it! I love him and I miss being with him!" yelled Angel. She stopped dead in her tracks and raised a hand to her mouth, shocked at her own outburst.

Angel cringed, as she heard her inner voice go on. Was it her conscience, a voice of reason or insanity? [I never could understand why you let yourself sleep with him].

Angel opened her mouth to start to argue but the voice cut in, [Oh, I know why you think you did it. While Demon was hurting and in pain, pushing everyone away who loved her, including and especially her husband, you offered the comfort and support Matt needed. You helped him, yes, but did you honestly think that at the end of it you would just be able to walk away? That when he was able to get Demon back, you could be the noble sister-in-law? Without it hurting you? And while we're at it, let's be honest. You may have wanted to help Matt, but you also wanted to help yourself to something that has always been forbidden to you--your sister's husband in your bed, making love to you.]

The young witch chewed her lip in thought. Her inner voice was right and it shamed her to admit it. She let out a shaky breath and felt her throat contract, as she remembered the conversation she'd had with Matt a few days before.



After he and Demon had reunited, Matt had come to Angel, to talk about what had happened between them. For the first time, he'd admitted that he loved Angel, but at the same time he reconfirmed his love for Demon and confessed that Demon was his life. Angel had agreed that things would be as they had been before, and she and Matt would always remain friends. The Captain had left and he may have thought Angel was fine, but the moment the door had closed behind him, she had crumpled to the floor and sobbed for what she could never have.

After that she had tried to be strong. She had avoided Matt as much as possible and continued her sessions with Catherine, who helped her deal with her feelings. For a while, it seemed everything was fine, but in the past couple of days, Angel had started to feel as if she was unraveling. She couldn't put her finger on the cause. Maybe it was seeing how close Matt, Demon and Marcus were now. They had always been a close, loving family, but their intimacy seemed strengthened now. It left no room for doubt. Nothing and no one could ever come between them. And maybe it was seeing Lily with Luke and John, always so intimate and in love.

[It reminds you, you're the only one who doesn't have what they have,] interrupted her inner voice.

"You don't say?" asked Angel sarcastically.

[No needed to get angry with me!] the voice shot back.

Angel sighed. "I'm sorry. You're right. It does remind me of that, but it's more than the love and romance, it's..."

[It's what?]

"It's the need to feel sheltered, protected...safe," admitted Angel, quietly. "No matter what, Luke, John and Matthew make Demon and Lily feel safe and protected. I don't have anyone who makes me feel like that."

[You don't feel protected? You know Matthew, Luke and John would protect you from harm just as they would your sisters.]

Angel sighed, "I know that, but I'm not talking about protection from harm or an outside threat. I'm talking about someone making me feel safe on a level that... I can't explain. Just to feel safe physically is one thing, but I want-need-to feel emotionally secure. None of them could give me that, because they're committed to my sisters. I need to know that one day I'll have a man in my life who can give me what Demon and Lily have."

[You'll find him one day. You have to believe that.]

Angel closed her eyes for a moment before opening them again, saying out loud, "I'm trying, but I haven't exactly had good experiences with men in the past. In fact, I can't think of one man I've been with who hasn't hurt me. Every man I've been attracted to or loved has hurt me on one level or the other. Lucas,

Ursa..." Angel paused to raise her hand to her neck where the Keeper had been attached. She could still feel the scar.

It was fading, and would one day be gone completely, but for now it was still a very visible reminder of what had happened because of her attraction and involvement with the handsome Centauri. She turned her thoughts abruptly away from memories of those awful times. "Matthew. Well with him it's always been bittersweet. The heartache of knowing I can't have him for my own."

[What about Luke? He's never hurt you. And Mal Fillion didn't hurt you, either.] Angel smiled, her inner voice was right. Luke had never hurt her.

"With Luke it was and is different. That was just friendship. And with Mal it was pure lust. It wasn't romance. With the others it was romantic love and I always get hurt. I'm tired of that and I'm close to giving up on it. Romance and love equal pain for me. I don't want to feel that way. I want to be hopeful, to believe that romance can be good, even if just for a moment. I want to hold on to the belief that one day the one true love of my life will come, and it will be good and not hurt," explained Angel to herself.

[How do you hope to find that out?]

Angel shook her head, "I'm not sure, but I know the answer lies in a man who can make me feel sheltered, safe and protected. A man I can be with, and it doesn't feel wrong. Where there's no guilt, worry or pain."

[Have you ever thought that maybe the last thing you need is a man? Haven't you realized that this pain is all because of men? What makes you think involvement with another man will solve the problems?]

Angel walked back over to the sofa, sat down and rubbed her face with her hands. She just couldn't think of any man who could give her what she needed. It was hopeless.

[Maybe not,] cut in her inner voice.

Angel lifted her head and frowned, "Why?"

[You've listed some of the men you've been with, but you haven't listed them all. I'm surprised at you for not remembering. There was another.]

"What are you talking about?" asked Angel, her curiosity piqued.

Her inner voice laughed. [I know a lot has happened, but how could you forget a certain spell that brought to life one Dylan Hunt?]

Angel gasped. She had forgotten that. "Oh my god... Dylan." How could she have forgotten him? Nearly two years before, bored and at a loose end, she'd been watching a data crystal of 21st Century TV programs. Wanting to make the pictures clearer, Angel had cast a spell. Instead of doing what she'd expected, the spell actually brought the fictional characters to life in her living room.



Angel smiled broadly at the memory of having a vampire, an FBI agent, a Jedi-to-be, his scoundrel friend and a Wookiee in

her living room. Angel felt her face flush with warmth as she recalled the last member of that mismatched group to come to life--Dylan Hunt. They had spent a precious few hours together before Angel had had to send him back. Most of all, Angel remembered how Dylan had made her feel when she lay in his arms.

It was suddenly clear what she needed to do.

[Whoa, Angel! What are you planning?] Asked the voice quickly, as she stood and moved over to her collection of data crystals.

Angel rooted through them and let out a satisfied sigh when she found what she was looking for. Before she could pop the crystal into the entertainment panel, her inner voice cut in. *[What a minute! You can't do what I think you're going to do.]*

"You are me, you know very well that's exactly what I'm going to do," answered Angel.

[You can't!] Argued her inner voice. *[What if it's not like the last time? If Dylan lets you down, you'd be worse off than before! You can't just vanish into an episode of Andromeda without the Excalibur's computer notifying the bridge that you just disappeared from the ship. And you have no idea if the spell would work the other way around! What happens if it doesn't work? Or if it does work but you can't get back? Remember what happened when you nearly got stuck in that episode of Charmed?]*

Angel paused and contemplated the answers. There were some good questions there, but she had answers. "You know how good I am at magic, it will work. The Charmed thing was an accident caused by a spatial anomaly; it won't happen again. As for Dylan letting me down, I have a good feeling about this particular Captain. My vanishing from the Excalibur for a few hours can be sorted out easily enough."

[How?]

Angel grinned, "Watch and find out." Angel activated her view screen and asked the computer to contact Lt. Jackson. Angel knew Jackson would be on duty that night, as both John and Gideon had the night off.

A few minutes later, Angel bid Jackson a goodnight and smiled with satisfaction. She had explained to Gideon's second in command that she was working on something. She didn't explain exactly what, and Jackson was trained well enough not to inquire. Angel had told the Second Officer that it might appear that she was no longer on the ship. She had asked Jackson not to panic, saying she was fine and that she would 'reappear' by morning. Angel knew that if it had been any other member of Gideon's crew they wouldn't have been so willing to go along with such a request, but thankfully Jackson was a friend. With that little task out of the way, Angel turned back to the entertainment panel, picked up the data crystal and inserted it into the crystal slot.

[I hope you know what you're doing,] warned her inner voice.

Angel smiled, "I'm taking a risk, I know, but I have a good feeling."

[You better hope so, because if it goes wrong, you'll be in BIG trouble.]

Angel laughed softly. "I'm willing to take the risk, if Dylan can help give me back something I've lost."

She activated the crystal. As the images appeared on the viewscreen, she began to say the words that she knew would take her into a world far from reality.

The words were no sooner completed than Angel felt her body begin to tingle. It wasn't painful, just extremely odd. The room began to glow and distort, as if everything around her was melting. The glow began to get brighter, until she had to close her eyes to the intensity. The floor beneath the young witch seemed to fall away and she was overwhelmed by a sensation like being on a roller coaster. There was a soft whining hum in her ears, then suddenly it all stopped and Angel felt herself hit the floor.

For a few moments she stayed down, regaining her composure. Then she opened her eyes. She was definitely not in her quarters. Slowly, Angel stood and looked at her surroundings, her eyes coming to rest on a figure lying in bed in the semi darkness. A smile began to form on her face, as she squinted and made out the features of the man sleeping there.

"Dylan," whispered Angel.

The spell had worked. She was no longer in her reality but aboard the Andromeda Ascendant.



For a moment, Angel stood as still as a statue in the semi-darkness of Dylan's quarters. She watched the figure lying asleep in the bed. Questions began to flit across her mind. What if Dylan wasn't happy to see her? What if he didn't even remember her? What if when she had returned him to this existence, the memory of his time with her had been wiped from his mind? Maybe this was a bad idea. Maybe she

was just reaching for something in desperation and it couldn't be found here.

Dylan stirred, causing Angel to jump nervously. She stepped back, intent on disappearing before he awoke, but the sound of a piercing alarm froze her to the spot. Her heart lurched as she watched him wake instantly. The voice of Andromeda replaced the alarm, warning her Captain of an intruder in his quarters. Before Angel could find her voice to assure Dylan she was not a threat, he leaped out of bed. She saw him reach for something on the table beside his bed, then she heard the sound of him activating his force lance.

"Whoever you are, I suggest you don't move." Dylan's voice was steely as he gave the order and Angel complied eagerly. "Andromeda, lights."

The room was instantly filled with light, and Angel was finally able to see the man she had come to visit. Even though she was on the wrong end of a force lance, she couldn't help but admire the view before her. Dylan stood naked from the waist up, legs spread apart, the hand holding the force lance held out in front of him, aimed straight at her heart. Angel let her eyes drink in the sight of him. He was magnificent! She managed to tear her eyes from his torso to Dylan's eyes and for the first time she saw his expression flicker. Before either of them could speak, the holographic form of Andromeda appeared in the space between them.

Andromeda eyed Angel suspiciously, before she directed her attention to Dylan. "Dylan, is everything OK? Do you want me to call Tyr or Beka?"

Angel had to smother a grin at the idea that Andromeda thought her to be a big enough threat to warrant the presence of Beka or Tyr. She pushed aside that thought and waited to hear what Dylan

would say.

For a moment, he ignored the hologram as he focused on Angel, then finally he turned to look at Andromeda. Shaking his head, Dylan lowered the force lance. "That won't be necessary. Our visitor is not threat."

"But..." began Andromeda.

"It's all right, Andromeda. She's a friend. Please stand down and engage privacy mode," said Dylan, giving Rommie a gentle smile of reassurance.

Angel could tell Andromeda was not happy about Dylan's request. The hologram turned to look at Angel. The young witch could see the searching look in the hologram's eyes, as she tried to figure out who the visitor was. But Andromeda was a warship and she didn't question the orders of her Captain. She wasn't happy, but she complied with Dylan's order, giving a brief nod, and vanishing. Once again Dylan and Angel were alone. Dylan dropped back and sat on his bed, looking up at Angel without saying a word.



Angel finally broke the silence, as she waved a hand at the force lance he still held by his side. "Is that a force lance you have there, Captain Hunt, or are you just pleased to see me?" It was a desperate attempt at humor, however stupid, to try to break the tension between them. To her relief, she was rewarded with a chuckle as Dylan put the weapon down, stood and began to move toward her.

Angel held her breath as Dylan walked up to her. To her delight, she found herself being taken into a warm embrace. She wrapped her arms around his waist and returned the hug, before Captain Hunt pulled back and smiled warmly.

"This is a surprise."

Angel had to crane her neck to look up at him. [God, I'd forgotten just how big he is,] she thought, before she gave a nervous smile and replied, "I hope it's a welcome one?"

Dylan didn't say anything. He just took her into his arms again. This time, Angel felt herself being lifted off the ground against his broad chest, as he claimed her mouth in a deep, passionate, welcoming kiss. When he finally broke away and lowered her gently to the ground, she was out of breath. Dylan reached out and brushed a strand of hair from her face, his voice slightly gruff as he spoke. "A very welcome surprise, Angelique. I have to admit, I never expected to see you again, so this is wonderful."

Angel smiled and reached up to run her fingers along Dylan's mouth. "After our first meeting, Captain Hunt, I assumed you'd know that I'm full of surprises," she grinned.

Dylan laughed, before kissing the tips of Angel's fingers. As he spoke, he took her hand in his and held it between them, "You are at that. It's not every day a beautiful woman from another existence appears in my bedroom in the middle of the night."

Angel's eyebrow shot up. "Really? I would have expected hordes of beautiful woman to be constantly trying to get into your bedroom, at any time of the day or night," she said, teasingly.

"I should be so lucky," returned Dylan, with a grin.

"Well then, this is your lucky night. I have appeared in your bedroom, and I'll admit that getting in here was somewhat of a surprise to me, too. I didn't expect to appear in this scene when I cast the spell to come here. But I never look a gift horse in the mouth, and it was..." Angel trailed off, to pull her hand free from Dylan's. She allowed her hands to run up his chest, savoring the feel of the soft hair covering the firm flesh beneath. She collected her thoughts and continued, "It's a wonderful surprise to find you in this state of undress. It saves me the time of having to strip you out of your uniform." Angel gave him a naughty grin.

Dylan gave a soft snort and grabbed Angel's wrists, gently pulling them away from his chest as her hands started to trail toward the waistband of his pants. He let go of her wrists then stood back to give her a disapproving frown. "So that's all you came for? My body? I feel so cheap and used. I mean, couldn't you at least engage in a little conversation like, 'Hello, Dylan. How are you? It's nice to see you again.'" Dylan paused for a moment, then continued, "I'm beginning to think I should call for Tyr and have him throw you in the brig, until I decide what to do with you for intruding like this."

Angel's stomach turned at the threat, then she noticed the gleam in Dylan's eyes. The rat! He was teasing her. Well, she could play that game, too. Raising an eyebrow and cocking her head sideways, she clucked her tongue at him. "Shame on you, Dylan Hunt. You should learn it's not wise to tease a witch."

Dylan folded his arms and grinned back at her. "So what happens when someone teases a witch? Do you turn them into a frog?"

"That only happens in fairy tales. In reality we do something else," said Angel, as she stepped forward, a wicked grin on her face.

"You going to tell me what that is?" asked Dylan, laughter showing in his blue eyes.

Angel's grin got even broader. "Oh no, Dylan. I don't tell you. I show you."



Before Dylan could question what she meant, Angel focused her power on the big man and effortlessly lifted him. The Captain gave a startled yell, as he found himself being raised off the ground and flung through the air onto his bed. Angel ran forward and jumped onto the bed to sit astride him. Before Dylan could recover from the surprise, she grabbed his wrists and pinned them above his head. She giggled at his look of astonishment then bent forward to give him a brief kiss on the tip of his nose before straightening up and grinning at him. "You should see the look on your face!"

Dylan frowned and struggled against the hold she had on his wrists, but Angel was using her telekinesis to hold him down and he was unable to break free. "How the hell did you do that, and how are you managing to hold me down like this?"

Angel laughed huskily and gave him another kiss, this time on his mouth, which she wasn't surprised he returned. Dylan may have been startled by his position but it was clear from his body's reaction beneath

her that he was also enjoying it.

"Well apart from being a witch, I'm also telekinetic," revealed Angel, with a grin.

Dylan's eyes widened incredulously. "You're telekinetic?" Angel nodded.

Again, he tried to free himself from her hold, but he soon gave up as he realized he wasn't going to get loose. He fell back on the bed and broke into a grin. "Amazing, and it does explain how someone of your size can be stronger than me. But come on, Angelique, this isn't exactly fair. You have me at a disadvantage and I can't do anything when you have me pinned down like this," said Dylan, coaxingly.

He had a point, and while Angel was enjoying having him pinned beneath her, she would much rather be under him. She nodded, "You have a very good point there. I hope you've learned your lesson?"

Dylan nodded, his expression serious. "If I could cross my heart, I would swear as an officer of the High Guard that I have indeed learned my lesson. It's dangerous to tease a witch. Fun, but dangerous," he added with a grin.

Angel burst out laughing and in doing so let her concentration slip. Dylan instantly felt her hold relax. For a big man, he was surprisingly quick. Angel suddenly felt herself being grabbed and turned onto her back. She wasn't protesting, or struggling; she was precisely where she wanted to be. Dylan was careful to keep most of his weight supported on his arms either side of Angel, in order not to crush her beneath him.

[So big, yet so gentle.] thought Angel. The next few moments were a blur as somehow she found her clothes being removed, carefully, gently, until she lay beneath Dylan, naked in his arms.

She reached up to stroke his face. "Hello, Dylan. How are you? It's nice to see you again," said Angel, teasing him with his earlier words.



Dylan laughed then lowered his head. His mouth claimed hers in a tender, passionate kiss. When he finally pulled back he smiled down at her, "It's good to see you too, Angelique. I've missed you."

His words surprised and delighted Angel. "We only had a few hours together, nearly two years ago. I didn't think you would miss me when I sent you back."

"You had a strong impact on my life, Angelique, even if it was for such a brief time. You're not easily forgotten," said Dylan honestly.

Angel's heart soared at his words. She lifted her hands and grabbed Dylan's face to draw it down to hers, so she could kiss him. Their lips met and Dylan's mouth opened invitingly. Without hesitation Angel thrust her tongue into the warm haven of his mouth, and sought his tongue. Finding it, she entwined her tongue with his, drinking in the taste of him as if her life depended on it.

Dylan had admitted she had a lasting impact on his life. The truth was, so had he on hers, maybe even more so. That was why she was here, because Dylan could give her something she had nearly lost completely—hope. Already, within a few moments of being in his presence, Angel could feel the very thing

she had come to get. The feeling of being sheltered and protected.

Angel let herself enjoy the haven of Dylan's mouth for a few moments longer, before finally tearing herself away. She looked into the depths of Dylan's warm blue eyes and was suddenly overwhelmed by how this man made her feel.

Her face must have shown something of her feelings, because Dylan asked with concern in his voice if something was wrong. Angel breathed in deeply to calm herself, then reached up to stroke his cheek as she smiled. "Nothing's wrong, Dylan. In fact, I think everything is perfect," she said, her voice husky.

Dylan opened his mouth, about to say something, but Angel quickly stayed his words by placing a finger over his lips. "Please, Dylan. I don't want to talk anymore. I need you to make love to me. Please?" Angel couldn't help the note of desperation entering her voice.

For a moment, she saw Dylan hesitate. She knew he had questions. They were questions that she wasn't ready to answer just yet. With relief, Angel watched him nod and smile gently. "We can talk later."

There was no room for thoughts or words, as Dylan lowered his mouth once again to Angel's. The only thing that existed was how he made Angel feel, as he began to make love to her.

For over half an hour both Dylan and Angel took turns in caressing, fondling, teasing and arousing each other as they explored and pleased each other's bodies. Now it was once again Dylan who was in control. His mouth found a swollen nipple and began to gently suck on it, while one of his hands move caressingly down Angel's body until it reached the dark mound of curls at the top of her thighs. As his hand paused on the V, he lifted his head from her breast and moved to gently nibble at her lower lip before kissing her thoroughly. Then he pulled back and smiled at her, softly instructing her to part her thighs.

Angel whimpered at the seductive tone of his voice and complied willingly. She parted her thighs to allow Dylan access to her hot center. He lowered his head once again to her breasts, licking around the hard nub of one then the other. His hand moved between her thighs, causing Angel to arch up off the bed, to get closer to his fingers as they brushed past her clit. She cried in fulfillment as finally, Dylan gently inserted a long slim finger inside her hot center, and slowly began to move it deeper inside her. A second finger soon joined the first in pleasuring her, at the same time as his thumb began to rub her hard, aroused clit.

A wave of heat washed over Angel as Dylan continued to move his fingers in and out of her. His mouth continued to suck, lick and nibble on her breasts. His thumb moved in small circles around her clit, pushing her ever closer to bliss. As she felt herself reaching the apex of pleasure, she suddenly fought the release and in a gruff, husky voice called to Dylan.

"Dylan, please I want to come with you inside me. Please, I need you inside me... now."

Dylan lifted his head. His fingers continued a slow rhythmic movement inside her. He kissed her tenderly on the lips and looked down at her with passion filled eyes. "I want you to be ready for me, Angel. I'm too big to just rush in," he said teasingly, his voice as husky as Angel's had been.

Reaching up, Angel stroked his cheek and let her eyes slide down his body to where his cock was pressed between them. She hadn't forgotten how big he was compared to the other men she had been with. She smiled back up at him. "I haven't forgotten you're a big boy, nor have I forgotten just how gentle you can and will be. Besides that," Angel paused as she lifted her hips to meet Dylan's fingers moving inside her, taking them deeper. "I'm ready for you and I know you're more than ready for me." To make her point,

she moved her hips, purposefully brushing them against his cock, causing him to moan, almost as if he was in pain.

As Angel stilled her movements against him, Dylan laughed and raised his free hand, stroking a strand of hair out of her face. "Patience isn't your strong suit, is it?"

Angel grinned up at him, "I'm working on it, but Rome wasn't built in a day, so will you just shut up and take me?"

Dylan snorted softly and shook his head, "Maybe I should teach you how to be patient?"

Angel's hands reached up and grabbed his face, drawing it down to her, "I said shut up and take me!" Dylan wasn't given a chance to respond, as she pulled his face down to claim his mouth in a hard, feverish kiss.

There was no resistance from Dylan. Instead, Angel felt him shift his position. He thrust his fingers a few times more inside her before withdrawing, then he lifted his long body until he was lying between her thighs. He remained unmoving, with the head of his swollen organ just at the entrance to Angel's hot center.

After several moments, Dylan broke the kiss and asked, "You sure you're ready?"

Angel's heart contracted at how tender he looked and sounded. She reached up to run her fingers along his mouth, "Positive. I want you Dylan. I need to feel you inside me."

Dylan lowered his head and kissed Angel briefly, then he lifted up, careful to place his arms either side of her as he positioned himself. Then slowly, carefully, he moved his hips. Angel gasped as he pushed the head of his cock past her wet folds. She tensed as his large size stretched her walls painfully. Dylan must have sensed her discomfort because he stopped moving, giving her time to get used to having him inside her. When he was sure Angel was relaxed and ready for more, he thrust forward gently until he was buried inside her. Once he was completely enclosed he stopped moving, lowering his mouth to kiss his way along her throat and collarbone.

Then he began to slowly move in and out, in unhurried, rhythmic movements. Angel lifted her knees higher, positioning herself in such a way to allow him easier access. Her moans of pleasure as he moved gave Dylan the encouragement to pick up the pace. He began to move harder and deeper, but still in such a way that he never hurt her, as he reached the spot deep inside her that gave her the most pleasure.

Their mouths locked in a deep, passionate kiss as Dylan drove into her, every stroke pushing them closer to climax. Angel lifted her legs and wrapped them around his waist, using the strength in her legs to match the movements of his hips, spurring him to go deeper, filling her more completely than she had been in a long time.

Both were moaning against the other's mouth as they got closer to the edge. Angel could feel the walls of her vagina starting to contract and pulse against Dylan's shaft causing him to break away from her mouth and bury his head against her shoulder as he groaned in pleasure. He began to thrust more slowly, with every stroke hitting Angel's center of pleasure.

Angel tried to hold on, knowing as soon as she gave into the pleasure, release would soon follow for both. She wanted to have him inside her for longer, but Dylan's movements created such unimaginable pleasure

that she couldn't fight it. It took only a few more thrusts and Angel was thrown over the edge. She arched up against him as an orgasm tore through her in painful ecstasy.

Angel was barely conscious of Dylan crying out her name, as her walls tightened around his length, taking him over the edge with her. She felt him thrust deep inside her one last time as he filled her with his hot seed. Angel felt another orgasm building like a slow burn until it finally exploded and she cried out Dylan's name, letting the pleasure wash over her, clinging to him as he collapsed on top of her.

For several minutes, both lay unable to move, as they gasped for breath in the wake of release. Finally, Angel felt Dylan shifting his weight from her. She let go of him, so he could pull out of her and lay beside her. As he rolled onto his back, he pulled her along with him, holding her against his chest. Neither said anything for a long time as Angel lay with her head resting on Dylan's chest, both their bodies hot and flushed from love-making.



Angel lay there content, happy and fulfilled and most of all, she finally felt what she had come searching for. The same sheltered and safe feeling she had felt the first time she had lain in Dylan's arms.

Dylan finally broke the silence. "Well, I have to say, I've never been so grateful for the fact that Rome wasn't built in a day."

Angel giggled and kissed his chest, before lifting her head to look at him. "Maybe you could tell my sister that? She never lets me live it down that I have a problem with being impatient."

Dylan chuckled and kissed the tip of Angel's nose, "Well, if I ever meet your sister, I will tell her that being impatient has its upside."

Angel grinned and kissed his chest, before looking up at him naughtily, "Something was certainly up a little while ago."

Dylan burst out laughing and hugged Angel to him, "I always know when I'm required to salute, Angelique."

Angel giggled and sat up. Letting her hand stroke the fine hair covering Dylan's chest, she glanced down at his limp manhood, then back at up him, asking suggestively, "Well, Captain Hunt, do you think in a little while you'll be 'up' for saluting me again? And call me Angel. That's what my friends call me."

In answer Dylan sat up and put his arms around Angel's waist. His lips came down on hers and he slipped his tongue inside her mouth, kissing her deeply. When he pulled back after a few minutes, his eyes were dark with need. "I think that can be arranged, Angel."

Their mouths met in another kiss that only came to an end when both realized their need to breathe. Dylan looked at Angel tenderly as he spoke. "While I regain my strength, how about we talk?"

Angel shifted her position, half turning as she avoided Dylan's intense blue eyes and lay down beside him with her back turned toward him. "Why talk? I just want to lie here with you, Dylan," she said

uncomfortably. She really didn't want to talk, especially if he asked questions she wasn't comfortable with answering. She felt Dylan move behind her. Her body trembled as he lay behind her, spooning himself against her back, his arm pulling her tighter against his belly as he kissed her shoulder.

"I get the feeling you don't really want to talk?" asked Dylan softly.

Taking hold of his hand, Angel raised it to her mouth so she could kiss his fingers. She forced herself to sound as casual as possible. "It's not that, I just want to lie here in your arms for a little while, in companionable silence," she explained. She wasn't happy about lying, even if it was only half a lie.

Dylan was silent, and for a moment Angel hoped he would accept she didn't want to talk. He kissed shoulder again. Something about the gesture told her he wasn't going to let it go. She was proven correct, as Dylan spoke gently, "Something tells me that since we last met, some bad things have happened to you, that have hurt you, and that's why you've come to me. You felt safe with me and you wanted to feel that way again, didn't you, Angel?"

Angel's eyes widened in surprise at how accurately he had guessed her reasons for being there, but she still couldn't admit it. It was silly; she knew she could talk to Dylan, but for some reason she didn't want to share her past pains with him. She had come here to escape them, even if for just a few hours.

"You're right. I do feel safe with you, but the reason I came here was because I wanted to see you again and have my wicked way with you," Angel joked, nipping at his fingers.

She felt the vibration of Dylan's chuckle against her back, "I'm flattered," he paused and pulled his hand free and placed it on Angel's arm, "but you're not being completely honest with me. Please. Talk to me. Tell me what happened."

Angel turned her head to look at him. "There's nothing to tell, really."

Dylan's brow creased slightly. "Really?"

The young witch nodded. Again, he was silent for a moment as he watched her intently. Angel began to grow nervous under the scrutiny of the blue eyes. "So you have nothing to tell? Then what about this?" he asked, as he raised his hand and gently pushed Angel's hair to one side revealing her bare neck. Her breathing stalled, as he lightly traced a finger over the scar that had been left behind after the Keeper had been removed.

"Angel, this scar can't be more than a couple months old. It's a nasty scar, from a nasty wound, so please don't tell me nothing has happened to you. It's clear you've been hurt, and recently." Dylan gently caressed the scarred area.

"It's nothing, really," said Angel, as she tried to turn away.

Dylan grabbed hold of Angel, and this time pulled her toward him, until she was lying on her back looking up at him. He traced the outline of her jaw, as he looked down at her with such tenderness it nearly broke her heart. "Don't do that, Angel. Don't pull away. Talk to me."

For a while Angel was silent, as they stared at each other. Finally, she sighed and reached up to brush the fringe of Dylan's hair away from his eyes. She smiled at him, knowing she couldn't remain silent, but at the same time she couldn't tell him everything he wanted to know. She settled for meeting him half way.

"All right, yes I was hurt," she admitted, as she touched a hand to her neck before continuing, "but I'll be all right. That's why I'm here, Dylan, because recently I lost hope. I needed to feel what it's like to be safe with a man, to feel sheltered."

Angel saw him opening his mouth, and she quickly stilled his words with a finger on his lips. "Please, don't ask me to explain further. I want our time together to be about something other than the horrible things that have happened to me. I don't want you to hear about that part of my life. Please, can you understand that?"



Dylan said nothing for a while and Angel let him think. Finally, he nodded. "OK, I'll leave it alone. I'll be honest. I'm not happy, but if you aren't ready to talk about it, then I can respect that. But just one thing?"

"What is it, Dylan?"

The Andromeda's Captain leaned forward and kissed Angel lightly before speaking, "Just promise me that you're all right now. That things aren't bad in your world. I don't think I could let you go back, if I knew that I was sending you back to a place where you could get hurt like this again." Dylan bent forward to kiss the scar on her neck.

A lump formed in Angel's throat and she had to clear it before she could speak. She took his face in her hands, and pulled his head up, "I can't promise you that, Dylan. You should know better than anyone that bad things can happen, even in a perfect universe. But I can promise that because of you I'm better than I was and I'll be better when I go back."

Angel smiled and kissed Dylan briefly, before pushing him off and over onto his back, so she could lie against his chest. "By you being who you are, and by me being in your arms, you remind me what it feels like to be safe and sheltered. You remind me what it feels like to trust a man. It gives me hope that if there's one man like you in the universe, then there surely have to be more out there somewhere, and not all men will end up hurting me," she explained, as she ran her hands down the length of Dylan's arms.

The Captain opened his mouth to speak, but Angel silenced him with a quick kiss. "Please, Dylan, that's all I can explain. I don't want to talk anymore. I just want to lie here with your arms around me. Please?"

Dylan nodded wordlessly, and Angel could see in his eyes that he understood. His arms came around her and drew her against him. Together they lay in comfortable silence. As she lay with her head on his chest, he caressed her arm, and she listened to the gentle rhythmic beat of his heart. The sound of Dylan's heart beat and feel of his embrace, began to lull Angel to sleep. Knowing that she wouldn't have to be back in her world for a few more hours, she let herself give into it. Within a few minutes she fell asleep in his arms.

Angel stirred from a deep sleep, and scratched the tip of her nose before settling again. A few minutes later something tickled her nose. With a soft growl of annoyance, she swatted it away and turned over. There was a deep chuckle and she opened one eye to find Dylan grinning down at her.

"Come on, sleepy head, you don't want to sleep your entire visit away, do you?" Dylan waved something in front of her nose again, tickling it. Angel peered at the offending object and found Dylan had been lightly

tickling her nose with a purple feather. [Where the hell did he get a feather from?] Wondered Angel, as she buried her head in the pillow to escape it.

Again, Dylan laughed. With one swift movement he pushed her, forcing her to roll onto her back. "What you gonna do about it, if I do want to sleep?" asked Angel grumpily, refusing to open her eyes. True, she hadn't come here to nap, but she had slept wonderfully and it was tempting just to curl up and go back to sleep.

"How about I do this?"

Angel felt the bed shift under his weight, then she felt Dylan's hands on her. Squealing, she tried to squirm away from him as he started tickling her all over. "Hey, that's not fair!" she gasped, in between fits of laughter.

"I have to do something to wake you up," said Dylan, as he continued to tickle her mercilessly.

Finally, Angel begged for mercy, "OK, OK! I'm awake! Stop tickling me!"

Dylan stopped immediately, and grinned down at Angel. She scowled up at him through the hair that had fallen in disarray over her face. Before she could brush it away, Dylan did it for her. Once her face was free of hair, he leaned forward and started to kiss her, his tongue slipping past her parted lips to gently probe her mouth.

When they finally broke apart, Angel stretched and smiled at him lazily, "Now that's how you should wake a witch. With a kiss."

"I'll be sure to do that next time," said Dylan, kissing the tip of her nose. When he lifted his head, his expression was serious. "How much longer can you stay?"

Dylan's question reminded Angel that she wouldn't be able to stay with him forever; She lifted her arm and looked at her watch, surprised to find that she had already been on the Andromeda for over three hours. It meant she had another few hours, before she had to return to the Excalibur. "I can stay a few more hours."

Angel could see the disappointment in Dylan's blue eyes. She felt the same way. She didn't want to have to go back so soon either. She lifted a hand to his face and caressed his cheek, "I know it doesn't seem long, but we still have a few more hours with each other," said Angel, as encouragingly as she could.

Dylan caught her hand and pulled it to his mouth, kissing her palm. "We can do a lot in a few hours."

Angel grinned up at him, "I was hoping you'd say that, because you have to salute me at least twice more before I leave," she said, leering at Dylan's body.



"Twice?"

Angel nodded, "At least."

There was a pause before Dylan broke into a wolfish grin, "I think I'm up for it."

"Then prove it," said Angel, grabbing him, so that he pinned her to the bed. Her hand slid between their bodies to gently stroke his already growing erection.

Sometime later, they lay in each other's arms. Angel felt Dylan move, and she lifted her head from his shoulder to look at him enquiringly.

"I was wondering. How would you feel about taking a shower with me?"

Angel's eyes widened with excitement. She remembered scenes from the TV where Dylan had emerged from a shower with damp hair. They had real water showers on board the Andromeda. Eyes sparkling, Angel sat up and nodded eagerly. "Captain Hunt, you know a way to earn a girl's eternal gratitude."

Dylan sat up and looked at her in amusement. "I'd swear you'd not had a shower in years from the way you look and sound right now."

"I haven't, well at least not a shower with real hot water, not in ages!" admitted Angel. For a moment, Angel remembered the last time she'd had a proper water shower. It had been on board Babylon 5, with Lucas. Angel ruthlessly chased the memory away. This was not the time or the place to remember Lucas Buck.

As Dylan frowned, Angel quickly explained about the vibe showers on board the Excalibur. She suppressed a giggle when Dylan wrinkled his nose in distaste. "A waterless shower? Insanity!"

Angel laughed, "I couldn't agree more. Hence the fact that if it came to a choice between chocolate and a hot water shower, I'll jump in the shower and worry about the chocolate later."

"Well then," began Dylan, as he sat up and got off the bed, "I can't have such a pretty woman being deprived of a water shower for so long." He bent down and kissed Angel before straightening up again. "I'll go and get it ready for us."



As Dylan started to walk toward the bathroom, Angel admired the view of his naked butt. She couldn't hold back a whimper at what she could see. Dylan must have heard her, because he paused in the doorway of the bathroom, saying, "Did you say something, Angel?"

Angel swallowed her drool and smiled, "Don't keep me waiting too long."

Dylan nodded and turned to disappear into the bathroom. Angel remained sitting on the bed for a moment wondering which view she preferred the most, the view of him walking toward her, or the view when he walked away. She decided she liked both equally, especially if he were naked as the day he was born.

Smiling at the thought, Angel got up off the bed, not bothering to put anything on as she wandered around Dylan's room. She wasn't being nosy, [I'm not Gideon, after all,] thought Angel, with a grin. She

was just curious. She was just about to pick up a photograph to take a closer look, when she heard Dylan's voice emerging from the bathroom, informing her that the shower was ready.

Turning, her breath caught in her throat, and she could feel the heat growing between her legs. Dylan stood in the doorway of the bathroom, with a white towel wrapped around his hips. Angel didn't know how he managed it. Fully clothed the man was gorgeous, undressed he was incredible, but with something as simple as a towel wrapped around him, he was stunning. Like an ancient God descended from Olympus.

Wordlessly, she watched as Dylan walked toward her, at the same time as she started moving toward him. Dylan looked at her curiously, asking, "Are you OK?"

All Angel could do was nod. When they met half-way, she reached up to cup Dylan's face and drew it down toward her. Opening her mouth, she claimed his lips, kissing him hungrily. Suddenly, all thoughts of the shower were driven from Angel's mind as her need for Dylan grew. Breaking the kiss, she placed her hands on his chest and began to guide him back toward the bed. When his legs eventually hit the back of it, Angel pushed gently, forcing him to sit down.

"Hey, I thought we were going to take a shower together."

Smiling, Angel lifted a hand and ran it through Dylan's soft hair, watching it flop back into place, before going down on her knees in front of him. "The shower can wait," she answered, leaning forward to place a kiss on his collarbone.

Dylan chuckled and gently grabbed Angel's shoulders, pushing her back slightly so he could look at her. "What's this all about?"

"Oh, it's simple really. I want you and I want you now."

"Ah, so wanting me beats wanting a shower?" asked Dylan, his lips twitching in a smile.

Nodding, Angel leaned forward again to kiss his dimpled chin. "Wanting you beats wanting a shower and chocolate combined," she admitted with a grin.

"What makes me so special?"

"Many things, my fine Captain. But right now, I have to admit it's your body," answered Angel, as she reached out a hand and began to trace a finger along the line of his collarbone. Her hand paused when her fingers reached a scar. She looked up and inquired about it. After Dylan finished telling her, Angel leaned forward and kissed the scar.

"Bad Magog for cutting you open like that," said Angel.

"That's what happens in my line of work."

Angel looked up. "Do you regret being who you are and what you do, Dylan?"

"Sometimes I do question my path in life," he admitted, "but I don't regret it."

Angel smiled. "Good, because you're doing the right thing in restoring the Commonwealth, never doubt

that." She started to move her hand down Dylan's shoulder toward his chest. She ran a finger over one nipple, grazing it slightly, pausing to watch it hardened before she continued a path down the middle of his chest, enjoying the feel of the soft hair as it gave way to her finger.

As she continued moving her fingers down his rib cage, Angel could feel him tremble slightly at her touch. When she found another scar on his side, she paused to ask him about it. Dylan explained, as she stroked a finger over the scar tissue gently, before moving her hand toward his belly where she briefly traced a circle around his navel. Then she followed the fine dusting of hair down to where it disappeared beneath the towel. Looking up, Angel found Dylan watching her intently. "What?"

Dylan smiled, "I can't remember a woman ever looking at me the way you do. You look as if you want to devour me."

Angel sighed dramatically. "Rats, I'm busted. Damn my face for giving me away. OK, I admit it, I do want to devour you and there's really nothing you can do about it I'm afraid." Angel hooked her fingers inside the top of the towel, intent on pulling it open.

Dylan captured her wrists and pulled her hands away. He held her hands in his lap for a moment, as he looked down at her, saying, "Nothing I can do about it, is there?" Then he raised his hands in front of his face, pretending to be afraid of the raven haired witch who knelt at his feet.

"Not a thing," said Angel smugly.

"Oh really, and why is that, my little witch?"

Angel broke into a wicked grin. "Have you forgotten so soon that I'm telekinetic? All I have to do is exert my power over your body and hold you immobile, while I eat up ever delicious inch of you." Angel's voice was low and seductive.



"Ah, you do have a point there. I wouldn't be able to fight you," agreed Dylan.

"Why fight me?" asked Angel, trying to pull her hands free from his hold.

"You're right, why fight you?" Dylan pulled Angel's hands with enough force to draw her up against his chest. Before his lips claimed hers in a kiss, he whispered, "Devour away."

He let go of her hands and wrapped his arms around her, as he lay back on the bed, pulling Angel along with him, until she lay on top of him. Their lips locked in a bruising, passionate kiss. They kissed a while longer until Angel lifted her head. Her body was hot with need, but the look of hunger she saw in Dylan's eyes, could have caused her to burst into flames.

"Where shall I start first?" questioned Angel, smiling wickedly.

"Have I shown you my force lance? You could start there," Dylan grinned up at her mischievously, stroking her back.

Angel giggled. "You have indeed shown me your force lance, and I'll get to it soon enough. For the moment, I think I'll start here." She lowered her mouth to Dylan's ear. She licked teasingly around the outer edge

before gently nibbling on the tender lobe, causing Dylan to moan softly. His moans of pleasure encouraged Angel, and she moved down to kiss and nibble on the soft flesh of his throat.

She worked her way around and over Dylan's Adam's apple, pausing to suck on it long enough to cause the skin to redden slightly. Then she worked her way up his neck to his other ear, nibbling and sucking on it until she heard him groan and shift beneath her, making her all too aware of his erection pressing against her belly. Releasing his ear, Angel began to kiss the top of Dylan's shoulder down toward his chest. To reach a nipple, she had to slide down. The movement of her body, as she brushed along his arousal, caused him to groan loudly.

"Oh god!"

Angel smiled and continued to kiss him. Her tongue circled one taut nipple, while she lifted her fingers to play with the other. After several long minutes of careful attention, she began to kiss her way down his belly. She paused to lick around the outside of his naval, before dipping her tongue inside the hollow. When she felt a hand gently stroking her hair, she lifted her head to find Dylan's darkened eyes looking down at her.

She smiled wickedly. "You want something, Dylan?"

"You know what I want," he growled.

Angel laughed softly. "Don't worry, I'm getting to that. It's the part I want to devour most."

Angel lowered her mouth to Dylan's belly and gently nipped him, effectively cutting off anything he was about to say. She then soothed the nip with a kiss, before slowly following the line of hair downward. As her mouth reached the beginning of the mound of dark, curly hair, she heard Dylan's breathing stall before continuing, slightly labored. Her own breathing had begun to quicken, as she glanced down at the large cock pressed between her breasts. It was now nearly fully erect, and she knew it would swell even more and grow even harder, when she finally took it into her mouth.

For a moment, Angel hesitated, wondering if she would be able to accommodate the large size of it. She decided it would be worth making the effort, to have Dylan in her mouth and to taste him. Angel moved downward until she was able to lie between his parted legs.

When she was settled, Angel focused her attention on his swelling manhood. She flicked out her tongue and licked at a drop of pre-cum that emerged from the tip. She let herself savor the salty taste, before opening her mouth to take in the large head. As her lips closed around it, she heard Dylan sigh. Her lips curved into a smile around the hot flesh, as she began to suck more of him inside her.

Angel took him into her mouth slowly, letting her lips stretch around the girth of his cock. As she sucked, she let her tongue lick the back of the engorged flesh. When she had about half of his length in her mouth, she stopped, relaxing her throat, as the head of his cock pushed back.

Angel kept her mouth wrapped around him for a while, then she lifted a hand between them to cup his balls, gently kneading them, as she began to pull her lips up his shaft. She released his length, so that she could lick the underside of his cock. Her tongue trailed up and down the vein, which she could feel pulsing as it pumped more blood, engorging him further, until his shaft stood erect above his belly. Angel continued to lick him, up and down and around, before lowering her mouth to his balls. As she took one of the sacs into her mouth, she heard Dylan gasp.

Angel released the hard sac and lifted her head to take his shaft back into her mouth as far as she could. When she started to withdraw, she felt Dylan's hips thrust up, automatically wanting to bury himself in her mouth. There was a stronger taste of salt in her mouth now, as Dylan's arousal grew. She pulled back to lick more pre-cum from the tiny slit, before sucking the head back into her mouth, making sure to let her teeth lightly graze the sensitive skin.

As Dylan's hips bucked he groaned, his voice gruff, "Angel, you keep that up and I won't be able to last for much longer."

Angel let go of his shaft and straightened up. She licked her lips before grinning at Dylan, as he watched her with lust-darkened eyes. She didn't say anything as she moved to straddle his hips. She leaned forward to nibble on his ear, whispering, "That was just a starter. Now it's time to move onto the main course."

As she drew up, Angel reached for Dylan's cock, stroking it a few times in her palm, causing the Captain to thrust upward in automatic response. Then she positioned herself over him. She could feel her own juices flowing past her soft folds; she was well lubricated for what was about to come. Holding onto Dylan's thick shaft, she helped to guide it into her wet center, as she lowered herself slowly and carefully onto him.

Her eyes remained fixed on Dylan's face, as she continued to impale herself. She was awed by his control and care for her, as he never once tried to thrust up into her, even though she knew that was what he wanted. He let her take her time, as she took all of him inside her. Angel continued to lower herself, until finally Dylan was buried deep inside her. She remained unmoving for a while, as she kissed him deeply.

Finally, she began to move, lifting herself off Dylan's shaft almost completely, before thrusting down to take him back inside her. Dylan remained unmoving, and Angel gently raked her nails down his belly, as she said huskily, "Move with me."

Dylan did as Angel wanted, and began to thrust upward, matching her downward movements. They fell into a comfortable rhythm, which gradually began to pick up speed, as they grew hotter with the need for release. Angel alternated her movements between moving up and down, and rotating her hips slightly. With every downward movement, she squeezed her pelvic muscles so that her internal walls tightened around Dylan's cock, causing him to moan loudly and thrust up harder, hitting her pleasure spot.

The room was filled with moans and whimpers, as their movements became harder and faster. Angel felt her insides start to melt and her vaginal walls pulse, as she came closer and closer. Her need drove her to pick up the pace, and she began to rock and rotate her hips back and forth. Dylan matched her speed. She could feel him throb inside her, as he got closer to the end.

With one final movement, release came. Angel's back arched and her head went back. She screamed, as a powerful orgasm tore through her. She continued rocking her hips back and forth, until she felt Dylan tense as he exploded into orgasm. He sat up, his arms wrapping tightly around Angel's waist as he came, continuing to thrust into her until he spent every last bit of himself deep inside her.

They both collapsed, as their orgasms subsided, leaving them exhausted and satisfied. Angel lay on top of Dylan as he relaxed. She remained unmoving, wanting to keep him inside her just a little longer. She rested her head on his shoulder as his arms hugged her to his chest, neither of them saying anything, both content to lay in each other's arms for the time being. Angel knew that they were both trying to avoid

what was inevitable. Soon she would have to leave.

Angel forced that thought away and kissed Dylan's shoulder before burying her head in his neck.

"Dylan?"

Angel jumped in fright, and her head whipped around to find the holographic form of Andromeda standing off to one side of the bed.



Dylan shifted underneath Angel, and she moved off him quickly, grabbing the sheet to cover them both.

"Andromeda!" Dylan's tone was brusque, as he sat up against the headboard.

Angel turned her gaze to the hologram, noticing that Andromeda look decidedly unsure of herself as she rushed to explain. "I'm sorry to break the privacy command, but you gave me an order to notify you when we were an hour from Vexirium." Angel didn't miss the look of both hurt and jealousy in Andromeda's eyes as she looked at the two people in the bed together, before she turned her gaze back to her Captain. "I wouldn't disturb you otherwise," the android finished, apologetically.

Dylan, having recovered from his surprise at the intrusion, nodded. "Thank you, Rommie."

Andromeda nodded and the hologram blinked out, leaving Angel and Dylan alone again. Dylan sighed and turned to Angel, "I'm sorry, Angel, but I'm going to have to get myself ready. I have a meeting scheduled with the President of this planet, to discuss them joining the Commonwealth."

Angel could hear the regret in his voice, and she took hold of his hand. "I understand, you have your duties to attend. Besides, it's getting time for me to go back." Angel forced herself to not sound as sad as she was feeling.

"Thanks for understanding, Angel," smiled Dylan gratefully, before kissing her briefly.

He paused, about to say something. Angel lifted a finger and placed it over his mouth, stilling his words. "I know, I don't want this to end either, but all good things come to an end whether we want them to or not. It's time for me to go home."

Dylan nodded, his eyes sad as he drew Angel into his arms and hugged her tightly. Angel had to forcefully swallow back a lump that had formed in her throat, as she held onto him. Finally, he let her go and

pulled back. "I better take a quick shower and get dressed." Dylan's voice was thick with regret.

Angel nodded, "I'll get dressed."

Slowly, both rose from the bed. Dylan paused before going into the bathroom. "You could join me, if you like?"

As tempting as it was, Angel declined. "If I joined you, we wouldn't make it out in time," she said, trying to keep her tone teasing.

A sad smile spread across Dylan's lips. "You're probably right. I'm just sorry you never got to take that shower."

"I got something much better, Dylan." She didn't have to elaborate. Dylan nodded then disappeared into the bathroom. As Angel heard him turning on the shower, she began to dress. It took a great effort not to throw herself onto the bed and sob. She kept telling herself that she had only come here for a brief visit, and that she had gotten what she had come for. She knew she couldn't stay. The facts didn't make it any easier.

Angel was sitting on a chair putting her boots back on, when her attention was caught by a sudden movement. Lifting her head, she found Andromeda watching her. The android's eyes were filled with sadness and accusation.

Angel felt guilty, knowing why Rommie was looking at her like that. The young witch knew what it was like to be in love with a man who was unobtainable. She stood, a thought suddenly appearing in her mind. Gideon was unobtainable to her, but it wasn't necessarily that way for Andromeda. Yes, there was a rule that a ship's avatar and the ship's Captain couldn't get involved, but that was a rule from an old Commonwealth. Things were different now and maybe it would be possible for Rommie to have what she wanted. Rules were, after all, meant to be broken.



Angel walked up to the hologram and smiled. "Hello, Andromeda."

"Who are you?" asked Andromeda, not acknowledging Angel's greeting.

"It doesn't matter who I am, Rommie. I'm going to be gone shortly," said Angel, hoping to soothe the other woman.

Andromeda stood, saying nothing and Angel realized she would have to say more. "Look, Andromeda, I don't have time to explain everything," said Angel, as she looked toward the bathroom, where she could hear the sound of running water. "I can tell you I'm no threat or rival for Dylan's affections. I came here because he was the only person who could help me with something. He's done that, and now I'm going back to where I belong."

"You don't have to explain anything to me," said Andromeda stiffly.

"Yes, I do. I know how you feel about Dylan. You're in love with him, Rommie, and I want you to know that I'm not going to get in the way of your feelings," explained Angel gently.

The hologram's face flickered with uncertainty, before she tried to deny her feelings for her Captain. Angel shook her head. "You don't have to deny how you feel, not to me. Look, I know the rules about avatars and Captains, but you can't let that stop you, Rommie. If you love Dylan, fight for him. You might be pleasantly surprised about his feelings for you."

Andromeda was about to say something, when her attention was drawn to the bathroom. Angel heard it, too. The shower had stopped. When she turned back, she could see Andromeda was making ready to disappear, before Dylan came out of the bathroom and found her there. "Just remember what I said, Rommie," said Angel, seconds before the hologram vanished.

Angel sighed. She hoped what she had said would help Andromeda. She didn't know if this love story would have a happy ending, but hopefully she had helped. Sadly, the witch knew she'd never be sure.



"Did I hear talking while I was in the shower?" asked Dylan, emerging from the shower. He was naked and Angel had to drag her eyes away from his body, before she decided to send his duties and her having to go back to her existence to hell.

"No, you must have imagined things," lied Angel.

"Guess so," said Dylan, as he moved to a cupboard and reached for his clothes. Angel watched in silence as he dressed. When he was finally in uniform, she walked up to him and wrapped her arms around him, as she rested her head against his chest. Dylan's arms came around her shoulders, and he held her tightly against him.

After a while, he pushed her back slightly, so he could kiss her before saying softly, "I wish you could stay with me here on

Andromeda."

Dylan's words sunk into Angel's mind and she wondered what it would be like if she did stay. She would be safe from Lucas, who she knew one day would find her and hurt her again. He'd never be able to find her here. If she stayed, she would have the one thing she had been searching for, a man who would love her and never hurt her. Those two facts alone made the idea very tempting.

Then Angel considered further. If she stayed, her sisters would miss her and she would miss them in return. And if Lucas couldn't find her, he would hurt them out of spite. She could never let that happen.

Her sisters weren't the only ones who she'd miss terribly. There was also Gideon, Luke, John and her nieces and nephews. And besides all that there was another reason Angel couldn't stay with Dylan--Andromeda. If she stayed, it would deny the beautiful avatar what she desired, and Angel wouldn't hurt her like that.

Smiling sadly, Angel reached up and caressed Dylan's cheek. "Maybe if things were different, I would, but..."

"But you have to go back." finished Dylan.

Angel nodded. "Yes. I came here for a reason and you gave me what I needed. Now it's time to go home

and for you to continue your mission." Angel paused as a lump of emotion stuck in her throat. "But the gods know it's going to hurt me leaving you."

As the tears started falling down her cheeks, Dylan drew her into his arms and lifted her up as he hugged her. His lips fell on hers, kissing her long and hard. When they finally broke apart, Dylan lowered her to the ground. Angel could see his eyes were moist with his own tears.

"I keep having to let go of women I care about," confided Dylan.

He looked so sad it tore at Angel's heart, and she stroked his face tenderly. "Oh, Dylan. Not all the woman you care about are gone."

"I don't understand."

Angel smiled. "Search your heart, Dylan. You may just find a love you can keep a lot closer than you think."

"What? Who are you talking about?" asked Dylan in confusion.

Shaking her head, Angel took hold of his hand. "It's not my place to tell you that, but just open your eyes and your heart, Dylan, and you'll see who I mean."

Dylan was about to question her, but she stopped him. "Shh, no more talk. Kiss me and hold me in your arms one last time, before I have to go."



Without argument, he drew Angel into his arms and lowered his head to claim her mouth in a kiss that was tender and desperate at the same time. Their lips locked as their tongues probed each other's mouths, savoring and tasting each other. Angel fought back the tears as she savored the last few minutes she would have in his arms.

Eventually they broke apart, both breathless from the kiss. Angel extracted herself from Dylan's arms quickly, knowing if she didn't do it now, she might never leave. She exhaled deeply to calm herself. "I'd better go."

Dylan walked toward her and Angel held up her hand to stop him, her voice thick with tears as she shook her head. "Don't. If you hold me now, I won't be able to leave. Just say goodbye, and promise you'll never forget me," said Angel with a sob.

The tall Captain stopped, looking sad as he said, "I'll never forget you, Angel."

Angel closed her eyes as tears streamed down her face. She tried to figure out why it was so hard to leave Dylan. She knew she would have to. She also knew that although she cared a great deal for him, she didn't love him. Then why was it so hard to say goodbye? Angel knew why. It was never easy saying goodbye to a friend, especially to one who had given her back hope, and knowledge of what it was like to feel safe with a man.

Her eyes opened suddenly as she felt Dylan's arms go around her. For a moment, she let him hug her,

before she tore herself out of his arms with a sob. "I have to go," she said desperately.

Dylan was silent for a moment. "I'm not going to see you again, am I?"



Angel's breath stalled. He had asked her something she hadn't been expecting. In her heart she wanted to believe she would come back, but her mind knew the truth. There were too many reasons why she had to stay away. Angel couldn't tell Dylan why, so she smiled. "You never know, Dylan. I'm full of surprises. When you least expect it, I'll appear, demanding that you salute me."

Even though Dylan laughed, she could see in his eyes that he knew the truth. "I look forward to that day, Angelique."

The use of her full name nearly broke her heart. Clamping down on the emotions, Angel squared her shoulders. She stepped further away from Dylan. He looked at her tenderly and asked, "Promise me again. You're going to be all right when you go back?"

"I promise. I'll be OK, thanks to you," answered Angel emotionally, before adding quickly with forced bravado, "Now my fine Captain, say goodbye. You have the President of Vexirium to meet, and I've learned it doesn't look good if you keep a dignitary waiting."

Dylan laughed half-heartedly, before saying seriously, "Goodbye, Angel. I'll miss you."

The breath caught in Angel's throat, and she nearly choked on her emotions. "I'll miss you, too."

For a moment, they both stood watching each other. Then Angel lifted a hand and waved, a sad smile on her face that she saw reflected on Dylan's handsome features, as she began the words of the spell. When the final phrase was spoken, she began to feel the same thing as when she had been brought there. Before the light got too bright and she vanished completely, she called out to Dylan, "Thank you."

The last thing Angel saw before the light got too intense was Dylan's smile. Then the floor fell out from under her feet, and she was transported instantly back to the Excalibur.

Epilogue

Angel remained in a heap on the floor for a few moments, gathering her out of control emotions. Lying with her eyes closed, she refused to cry. Her visit with Dylan had been wonderful and it had accomplished a lot. She felt hopeful again, and confident that she could get through anything. Holding onto that thought, and the memory of Dylan, Angel pulled herself up off the floor.

She stood for a few moments remembering, a smile forming on her lips. She was going to be all right, just as she had promised Dylan. She would miss him, but never forget him.

Sighing softly, Angel walked over to the entertainment unit and removed the data crystal. She smiled down at it and brought it to her lips to kiss it. Then she turned and walked into her bedroom. Opening a cupboard, she reached in and brought out an intricate trinket box that Lily had given her for Christmas. Opening it up, Angel reached in and lifted out a piece of deep red velvet, in which she carefully wrapped

the data crystal, before gently laying it in the box. The image of Dylan floated in her mind, and she smiled at it fondly. Then she closed the lid, and placed the box back into the cupboard for safekeeping.

Angel closed the door to the cupboard, then turned and walked back into the living room. She walked over to the comm unit. She intended to contact Jackson and inform her that she was back, then... [Then what?] asked her inner voice, speaking for the first time since she had left the Excalibur.

The young witch smiled. "Then I think I'll call my sisters and ask them if they and their men want to come to dinner tonight."

[All of them? Including Gideon?] Asked the voice quietly.

"Every single one of them, including and especially my brother-in-law."

[Your visit with Dylan really has changed your mood.]



"Yes, it has. It's lifted my spirits. I don't have to avoid Matthew anymore, because it's not going to hurt when I see him now."

[Why is that?] Queried the voice.

"It's simple. Dylan has helped me believe that I will one day find what my sisters have. I know it may be hard sometimes, to watch them all together, but I'll survive because I know one day I'll be as happy as they are," explained Angel happily.

Her inner voice fell silent. Smiling, Angel turned her attention to the comm unit. She dealt with Jackson quickly, thanking her friend for covering for her and signed off. Then she called Demon and Lily, using the conferencing feature of the comm unit. When her sisters answered she grinned.

"Hello. How about dinner tonight? I'll cook."

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