

The Witches of Eriadne: Something Wicked this Way Comes - Part 3: Divisions

by The Space Witches



No this isn't Bubba, this is Harry.

Chapter 2

The three witches lay awake in Lily's lounging pit, Demon and Lily cuddled on either side of Angel, facing her, hands linked with hers. When Demon had joined her two sisters, Angel had asked them not to dwell on the future. "We're together now, that's all that matters," she had pleaded softly, and her sisters had reluctantly nodded their consent. Anyone watching them during their bedtime preparations would have got the impression they had taken vows of silence, and none of the sisters seemed able to find the right words to break it.

There were so many things that Lily wanted to say and ask, so many emotions fighting for dominance inside her--almost too many to bear. [How can I let Angel stay here? How can I live with the knowledge that my sister is staying with a monster, just because she wants to protect us?] Looking across to Angel's other side, Lily found Demon looking back at her, and she almost winced at the guilt in her oldest sister's eyes. Lily tried to convey with her gaze that it wasn't Demon's fault, but the tall blonde lowered her eyes quickly. Lily knew that for the rest

of her life, Demon would blame herself for what had happened to Angel. [Demon needs me now,] Lily realized, [She needs me to be strong, and Angel needs that, too.] For that, she needed to clear her head.

Slowly, careful that her sisters didn't notice, Lily took a deep breath, then another, and another, concentrating on the scent of her pillow. A whiff of incense, jasmine, and something reminiscent of cool rain and warm summer days; the scent of *home*. Memories of the times she had spent in her second favorite spot in her room--after her window seat--flooded over Lily: sweet pain taking hold of her heart as she was watching the sleeping twins; sweet pain of a different kind making her cry out as her men made love to her in the same place; curling up among the cushions after breakfast only to realize that the next time she lifted her eyes from the pages of one of her favorite books, it was dark already.

Further and further into the past her memories led, and for a moment, it felt as if the events of the past eight years had been just a dream--the four Witches of Eriadne had never met the crew of the Excalibur and Lucas Buck, had never become the Space Witches, had never been separated into one and three, and then one, one and two. Maybe, Lily thought, she would wake up in the morning, finding Ilas lying here with them, and all this would be a dream--

[No! There's no way to turn back time, or change what has happened. And even if I had the ability to do it, I couldn't. The thought of giving up the happiness we have all known in these years is not something I want to contemplate. And there's no telling if more terrible things might have happened to us if we hadn't met the Excalibur crew.]

Lily thought of Jack Gideon--Matthew's counterpart from a different reality--who had entered their universe through a rift in space and time three years before. In Jack's reality, the Witches had been killed, and both John and Luke had died violently. The thought that they would never have met... [No. It is what is.]

Lily felt strangely calm now, with memories lingering in her mind. "Isn't this almost like... in the beginning, when we couldn't stand to be separated?" she said, her voice low. "We slept in the same bed for weeks."

"You're right. Only Ilas is missing," Angel replied softly. Lily could hear the sadness in her sister's voice, and that strengthened her resolve. She would try to make this last night into something that Angel would be happy to remember, something for her sister to hold onto in dark times.

"Ilas--like our own little puppy, always sleeping across the foot of the bed." Lily shifted, resting her right elbow on her pillow and supporting her head with her hand, so she could see her sisters better in the soft light.

"My feet always fell asleep when she kept rolling onto them," Demon added after a moment in which she almost visibly pulled herself together. Her tiny smile let Lily know that Demon understood what her littlest sister was trying to do.

"So you finally admit that having long legs does have its disadvantages?"

Demon snorted. "Your feet, of course, were nowhere near the end of the bed, since you always slept curled up in a ball. I still can't believe how much space you always took up, little Miss. Angel and I were relegated to one third of the bed's width."

Angel gave Lily a mock glare. "Yeah, we were lucky we never fell out of bed."

"Poor things," Lily teased, grinning. "You must have been so happy when we finally found the courage to move to separate beds."

Her sisters voiced their heart-felt agreement, and for a moment silence returned, before Angel spoke up again.

"Do you remember the knife training we got from Nikarran?" Her voice faltered for a moment before she spoke their old friend's name, and Lily squeezed her hand in reassurance. Angel's guilt about Nikarran's death on Mars may have eased over the years, but it was still there.

"I always thought Nikarran was very nervous about us learning to use weapons at first. Of course, he'd never have admitted it." Demon smiled fondly. "And I think in the end, he enjoyed it just as much as we did."

"Oh yes, it was such fun!" Angel chimed in.

"But you didn't enjoy the dressing down Nikarran gave you when he realized you were using your powers to help steer your stiletto."

"Well, he'd told us to use whatever *assets* we had..."

Demon snorted her amusement at Angel's pout. "*Except* our powers, as you well knew. We had good reason to ask him to teach us fighting techniques that we could use instead of and in addition to our powers."

Angel couldn't suppress a grin as she muttered, "Spoilsports."

Suddenly, her eyes lit up, and Lily barely had time to think, [Uh-oh,] before Angel turned her eyes on her little sister and said with a gleeful smile, "Talking about spoiling and sports, do you remember when we caught you and Karron..."

"...and I can still see the guards' shocked faces!" In between bouts of laughter, Angel concluded her retelling of an incident involving copious amounts of alcohol, a late night--or more exactly, very early morning--expedition into the castle's kitchen, and an unintentionally explosive recipe.

Lily was holding her belly, laughing so hard that tears were running down her face. Demon and Angel weren't any better off; all three of them literally rolling around the lounging pit, laughing. The incident had led to their Brakiri cooks laying down the law and forbidding the sisters to enter the kitchen in their absence for a year, and they had never really been able to live it down.

Slowly, the hysterical laughter turned into giggles, and Angel sat up, wiping tears of laughter from her eyes as she looked down at her sisters, her look turning from amused one moment, to sad the next. "Oh Goddess, I'll miss you so much!"

It was merely a whisper, but Lily felt as if someone had hit her hard in the stomach. She flung herself at Angel, with Demon only a split-second behind. Their arms went around each other as they kneeled in a circle, foreheads touching.

[[If I could have free choice of sisters, I wouldn't change a thing.]] Angel sent, even her mind-voice hoarse. *[[You truly are my sisters in all but blood. No one else would ever have done the incredible things you did, or sacrificed so much for me. It's time for me to do my part for you now. Even if it means...]]* Angel took a shaky breath, then finished in a whisper, "Even if it means never seeing you again." Suddenly she clung to them, her body wracked by sobs. *[[May the Goddess give me the strength to do this...]]*

[[You are strong, Angel. You're much stronger than you think. You'd never have survived so long if not. I'll pray for the Goddess to keep her protecting hand above you.]] Lily sent fiercely.

She knew Demon was crying, too, as their oldest sister added, *[[You will never be alone, Angel. Our love will always be with you, even if we can't be there. Never forget that.]]*

[[I won't. I will never forget. Never!]] A wave of love, pain, and fear rolled over Lily and Demon, and then all words were lost as they clung to each other, almost drowning in a sea of tears.

Lucas stood in the doorway of Lily's bedroom, watching the three women as they slept together in the lounging pit. He'd come to wake them, to tell them it was time to make their goodbyes, but now he just stood, lost in thought.

His eyes focused first on the smallest of the three. Lily slept curled up in a ball, her red locks cascading about her, covering her back and shoulders. Beneath the hair, Lucas could see that she wore a green silk negligee, which left her pale arms and shoulders bare. Tiny as she was, Lucas knew there was great strength in this woman. He smiled as he thought, *[Dynamite comes in small packages.]*

Lily could draw on the power within her to cast potent spells, but her strength was also her weakness. Her power was that of the earth, fertile and giving, growing from the roots of her love for her family. If he cut Lily off from the people she loved, from her children, her men and her sisters, she would wither and die like a cut flower. Lily's power wasn't the kind Lucas needed for his heir.

He moved his eyes to the other side of the pit, watching Demon as she slept. She wore her husband's black shirt again, and Lucas felt his lip curling in a sneer. No doubt she wore it for some sappy reason like wanting something that smelled of him close to her. For a brief moment he wondered how it might feel to have someone love him as deeply as Demon loved her husband. He shook his head, dismissing the idea as irrelevant.

Narrowing his eyes, Lucas examined Demon more closely, smiling as he saw how her movements in her sleep had dragged the shirt upward, exposing her long, pale legs to his view. He had to admit that she had one hell of a pair of legs. Half-reluctantly dragging his gaze up Demon's body, he focused on her face. She was more beautiful in sleep than she was awake, as her face relaxed from the frozen stare she maintained so much of the time. Lucas remembered the day he'd had sex with Demon, fathering her child. Her face hadn't been frozen then. For those few hours he'd caught a glimpse of the woman behind the mask, the real woman, who'd been hidden from him ever since, even when she'd begged before him on her knees, but who he could now see as she slept.

Demon's blonde hair glinted in the beams of light now streaming through the window as the sun rose, reminding Lucas of the source of her power. Her strength had always been like a beacon, lighting her from within. At the height of her power, Demon could have blinded anyone who looked at her with the brightness of that light, but now it was dimmed. The source of her power was buried deep within her, shadowed in sleep, hidden beneath layers of pain and fear. Demon was not the woman she had been, and she was no longer the woman he needed as the mother of his heir, even had she still been able to give him a child.

Lucas finally allowed his eyes to move to the last of the trio, lying on her back between her sisters, her arms around their shoulders, as their arms were draped over her. Angel wore a red silk and lace negligee that was cut low over her breasts, allowing Lucas to enjoy the view of the part of her he liked best. He allowed himself to linger for a while, watching the movement of Angel's chest as she breathed deep and slow. Then he dragged his eyes upwards and he felt his face fall into a smile.

Angel-face indeed. His Angel had the most beautiful face of all the witches. Even with her startling blue eyes hidden by her eyelids in sleep, she was still stunning. And she was his, body and soul.

Lucas took a silent step forward, looking more closely at his Angel, focusing on the source of her power. Like Demon's, it was buried deep within her, but unlike her sister, Angel's power was dark. While Lily and Demon could both be cut off from their strength by pain and fear, the same emotions would drive Angel into herself, allowing her to find and draw on the force buried deep inside her. While her sisters could be weakened by taking them away from the people they loved, Angel was only made stronger by adversity.

This is what Lucas had seen all those years before. This was the potential Angel had always had, but it was only now that her potential was close to being realized. It had been necessary for her to suffer, for her to grieve, to lose everything that mattered to her. Each blow in her life had strengthened her, with each loss she had grown, and now she was ready. Lucas could sense that Angel was now closer to her power than she had ever been.

That made her ten times more dangerous than she had been when they first met. Lucas knew that he would have to handle Angel carefully. He couldn't afford to have that power turned against him, but if he could manipulate her properly, use her love for him to his advantage, he would have the best mother for his son in the universe.

The smile faded from Lucas' face as he dwelt on the eventual consequences of siring his heir. The price the Bucks paid for their power was to die young at the hands of their sons. Lucas had been lucky that his first son, Caleb, had only banished him to the confinement of the Apocalypse Box and hadn't killed him. As a result, Lucas had lived much longer than his ancestors. He had lived considerably longer than his own father, whom Lucas had killed soon after his eighteenth birthday, taking the Rage and all the power that went with it for his own.

Lucas knew that from the moment his heir was conceived, his own days of life were numbered. A part of him wondered if this was why he had delayed so long, why he had waited all these years before coming to take Angel for his own, and why he had delayed taking Marcus until it was too late to make him into an heir. Lucas remembered how in the first few days after his release from the Apocalypse Box, he'd been driven by the Rage, and he'd taken every woman he could. First Demon, who had been fertile and ready for him, then Angel, who hadn't at that

time been ready to carry his heir, then Lily, whose furrow had already been ploughed. Within twenty-four hours of his release, he had taken all three women, compelled by the Rage.

After that first surge of procreative passion, he'd been more circumspect in spreading his seed. Since Angel had brought him back in his own body, Lucas had been much more in control of the Rage and its need for him to reproduce. He'd waited, biding his time, patient until the moment was right.

This was the right moment. This was the right woman. Everything was now right and Lucas was at last ready to bring forth the heir he truly deserved, the heir who would inherit his mother's dark powers, as well as his father's Rage.

He stepped forward into the beams of light streaming through the windows, ready to wake the sleeping women, knowing that as he did so, he was setting in motion events that would inevitably lead to his own death.

John Matheson looked around the table from where he sat between the twins and Luke, taking in the silent scene that was playing itself out to the conclusion they all dreaded. The scene seemed so surreal that John wondered if he might soon wake up from the nightmare. But at the same time, everything was too clear and harsh to be anything but real, even though he wasn't able to sense anything telepathically, because of Lucas' block.

John let his eyes roam along the table. When Matt, Luke, the children and he had arrived, the three Witches had already been seated, Angel at the head, with her sisters either side of her. Lucas had watched the families' reunion from his chair opposite Angel's. He had announced that he would prepare everything for their departure, while they enjoyed their breakfast, and then he had left the room. Since then, hardly a word had been spoken except the occasional, 'Could you pass the butter, please?' or 'Would you like some more tea?' spoken in soft, strained voices.

The presence of Sol, Harry, Bubba and four Brakiri guards, standing along the walls of the dining room, didn't help to raise the mood or foster conversation. Demon and Lily were holding their younger daughters on their laps, trying with little success to coax them into eating. The adults didn't fare any better, forcing nourishment into their bodies even though it was obvious nobody had any appetite. Even Faylinn and Marcus were so subdued that they didn't engage in their usual battle of words. The adults had explained that they would be returning home, but Auntie Angel would stay behind, leaving the children confused and sad. They knew something wasn't right, no matter how their fathers had tried to explain the situation.

John knew that Luke was resigned to Angel's decision, but he was worried sick about her. More than anyone else, maybe even her sisters, Luke had been Angel's confidant. John didn't know how much the young witch had told Luke about the time she had spent living on Babylon 5 with Lucas, but he knew she was still carrying mental and emotional scars from that time. Would Lucas destroy her this time, or had she grown strong enough to emerge unscathed? They were all too aware that they may never discover the answer to that question--most of all Angel's sisters.

Lily had clung silently to her men as they had embraced that morning, and her green eyes had been full of resignation and pain for a moment, before she had forced herself to pretend

everything was normal for the children's sake. John threw a quick glance toward her over the twins' heads, and found her looking worriedly across the table at Demon and Matthew, before Naima claimed her attention again.

Following his partner's look, John took in his former Captain's stiff stance and expression. Matthew had still not accepted Angel's decision, and John knew that his friend's anger came as much from worry, as from feeling helpless--as well as from guilt. Matthew had tried to find Lucas for years, but not even the Rangers had been able to discover any leads to his whereabouts. Matt hadn't needed to tell John and Luke the previous night that he felt he had failed Angel; that she would be safe now if he had tried harder to find and eliminate Lucas Buck. After Demon had left for Lily's rooms, to spend the last night with Angel, Matthew had stood out on the terrace for hours, brooding, before finally returning and settling down on one of the sofas. John and Luke had taken the other one, but it had taken them a long while before they fell asleep.

John's eyes drifted to Matthew's left. Demon was wearing her Ice Queen mask, but John had no doubt that she was aware of Matthew's feelings. And ever the oldest sister, loaded down with all the cares, responsibilities and grief that came with that position, she would no doubt feel guilty too, even if there was nothing she could have done to prevent this. John sighed silently. He hoped that Demon and Matthew were going to be able to help each other over their guilt and fear for Angel, despite their infuriating tendency to hide such feelings, even from each other.

John's eyes at last came to rest on Angel, who was sitting there with her features carefully schooled in a neutral expression, like the Oscar-winning actress she was. But in her stiff posture, and the strained muscles in her neck, John could see it was an act. His heart went out to his sister-in-law. He had never been as close to her as Luke, but the raven-haired witch was in some aspects not unlike Lily.

She had a fiery spirit, could be more stubborn than a mule--something which Matthew seemed to bring to the fore most often--and she had a big heart. When she had lived on the Excalibur and worked in Medbay, she'd been sought after for advice with natural remedies. She was a wonderful aunt to her sisters' children, and had always brought entertainment--and sometimes mischief--to any social gathering. Sometimes Angel reminded John of a cat, all graceful sensuality and teasing, the next moment showing her claws. At other times she seemed like a boisterous puppy, excited at everything new and very possessive when it came to what she considered to be hers.

John fondly remembered the production of Hamlet they had performed together on the Excalibur--Was it really four years ago already?--with Angel playing Ophelia, and John being 'volunteered' for the title role by Luke, who had directed the play. The rehearsals had proved to be a lot of fun, and John had come to enjoy Angel's wicked sense of humor. It had been a joy to watch her grow into the role, and the play had been a roaring success with the Excalibur's crew. John was proud that their little 'intrigue' with the recording of her performance had worked, and Angel's acting career had soared soon after she moved to Earth.

[But all that will be over now,] John realized. [Once again, Angel loses everything she has built because of Lucas Buck. Curse him!]

Suddenly, Angel looked up from her plate and her eyes met John's, as if she had sensed his gaze

on her. John smiled softly, trying to convey with his eyes, *[[You are stronger than you think, Angel. You can get through this.]]* She gave him a shaky, grateful smile, before lowering her eyes again.

At that moment the door to the dining room opened, and everyone turned to watch Lucas Buck saunter into the room. He stopped a few steps from the table, crossing his arms in front of his chest as he swept his eyes over the silent gathering, before he let them rest on Angel.

"It's time."

A silent procession followed Lucas and Angel out of the castle toward the ship. Some of the Brakiri who had greeted them were again carrying their luggage, while others were arranged around them, weapons in their hands. Matthew was carrying his daughter, while the other children walked, holding hands, among the adults. Lily was holding John and Luke's hands tightly, head high and eyes ahead.

When they stopped in front of the ship, Luke could feel Lily almost vibrating with the effort not to lose control of her emotions, and her fingernails dug into his hand as her grip tightened.

Somehow, it only really sank into Luke's mind at that moment: They would leave, and leave Angel behind to stay with a monster, never knowing when or if they would see her again.

Luke closed his eyes, trying to control the feeling of sickness that swept over him. *[May all the Gods and Goddesses forgive us. And may they hold their protecting hands over Angel.]*

Angel lifted her head and straightened her spine. Looking up at Lucas, who stood silently at her side, watching everything, missing nothing, Angel asked quietly, "Can I have a few moments?"

Lucas nodded, remaining silent but watchful as Angel turned to face her family. The moment had finally come to say goodbye. A part of her knew that this moment had been inevitable since the day she had set Lucas free from the imprisonment of the Apocalypse Box. She now realized that this was the price to be paid for the jealousy and spite that had led her to cast the spell on that distant day; the spell that had forced Matthew Gideon's spirit out of his body, and let Lucas Buck into all their lives. Angel only wished that she could pay the price alone, but that was impossible. All her family would suffer for her sin, and the people she loved most, the people she wanted to protect from harm more than anything in the universe, would be hurt.

[But this way causes them the least pain. This way, I can carry most of the burden myself, and they'll soon adjust to life without me. They did it before, when I was on Mars. I'm sure my sisters can manage again.] Angel's inner voice laughed at her bravado, telling her that she was only fooling herself. Ilas, Lily, and most of all Demon, would never stop grieving for their lost sister. As she would never stop grieving for them.

As so often before in her life, Angel told the voice of her conscience to shut up and leave her alone. She had a job to do, a role to perform. *[All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players.]* Angel quoted to herself, and she stepped forward to play the last scene

of this Act of her life, the most difficult scene she had ever played.

Forcing her face into a soft smile, she first approached Lily and her family, knowing it was cowardly to put off her final confrontation with Demon and Matthew but unable to help herself. Perhaps if she could get through her goodbyes to Lily, Luke and John without tears, it would help build her strength for her most painful leave-taking.

Angel stooped to smile at Lily's three children, touching each of their solemn faces in turn. Each child was so different, yet each showed their parentage clearly. Dasha looked so like John, but he had his mother's generous mouth. The little boy stood on tip-toe and threw his arms around his aunt's neck, whispering, "Goodbye, Auntie Angel. Don't cry."

Swallowing the lump the sensitive child's words had brought to her throat, Angel gave him a sad smile. "I won't, if you won't." Dasha gave a shy smile, then nodded sharply and stepped back, allowing his twin sister to step forward.

Faylinn shook her strawberry blonde locks. "I don't understand. Why don't you tell him to go away?" She gave Lucas a glare over Angel's shoulder, making the raven haired witch laugh softly.

"It's not that simple, Faylinn. One day you might understand. Now take care of your family for me. They'll need your strength." Faylinn had inherited her mother's fire, as well as her pale skin, but her mouth was shaped just like Luke's. There was no doubting who this young lady's father was.

Little Naima suddenly flung herself forward, hugging Angel fiercely, saying softly, "I want to be like you when I grow up. I want to be a famous actress, too!"

Angel smiled sadly at the little red-head, so like her mother in every feature. The acting career Angel had so painstakingly built was over. She would never appear on stage or screen again. That part of her life was done. Ruffling Naima's red curls, Angel said, "You can be anything you want to be, Naima. Don't let anyone stop you."

Naima seemed to catch the unspoken meaning of Angel's words, and like her sister, she shifted her eyes to glare over her aunt's shoulder at Lucas Buck, standing behind Angel, listening to everything she said. As Naima glared, Angel saw something she'd never noticed before. The little girl might be a duplicate of her mother in looks, but something about the way she narrowed her emerald green eyes, something about the intensity of that glower, suddenly told Angel who her father was. For just one brief moment, Matthew Gideon stared out of the little girl's eyes.

Carefully schooling her features to prevent any sign of her shock showing on her face, Angel straightened and moved to hug John, Luke and Lily. The three adults came together to wrap Angel in their joint embrace, and for a moment, Angel knew how it must feel to be part of a close, warm, loving family. Pulling herself away from them, with a pain of regret so deep she wondered if it would ever stop hurting, Angel put on a brave face and looked at the threesome.

"Take care of each other, and say goodbye to Ilas for me." She lifted her hand and touched Lily's face, then looked at the two men who stood either side of her tiny sister, one dark, one fair. Lily's guardian wolves: black and white. "And you two watch out for this little one. She bites."

The three of them tried to laugh as Angel stepped back, and she then watched as Lucas' men came forward to herd Lily, John, Luke and their children up the ramp and into the ship.

As they disappeared inside, Angel turned to face the other family that had stood silently watching her farewells. She knew this would be the hardest moment of her life. As she turned, a hand fell on her shoulder and squeezed gently. Lucas stood close behind her, near enough so she could feel the warmth of his chest against her back. He moved his mouth to her ear, his breath soft against her neck as he whispered, "You can do it, Angel. You have all the strength you need."

Angel felt Lucas' lips touch her hair and somehow it felt as if strength flowed from his hand, through her shoulder and into her heart. Lucas was right. She was strong. She could do this for her family, to protect them and keep them safe from harm. For a moment, Angel wondered at the kindness of Lucas' words and gesture, and it gave her a tiny hope that he could keep the Rage under control. It reinforced her determination to help Lucas conquer the demon within him. She would find a way to help the man she loved become a man worth loving.

Bracing herself to face this one last moment of pain, Angel first moved to face Matt, who held little Mattie in his arms. The little girl was sucking her thumb and looking solemnly at her aunt. Angel smiled and raised her hand to touch Mattie's face, saying softly, "Goodbye, Mattie. I hope you grow up with your father's strength, your mother's kindness and with none of your Aunt's foolishness."

"Angel, don't..."

Matt's whispered words were so full of pain that Angel had to turn her head away for a moment, swallowing her tears. She forced a smile to her face and turned back to face her brother-in-law, compelling her voice to sound relaxed as she said brightly, "Don't say you never thought me foolish, Matt. You know that wouldn't be true."

Matt lifted his free hand and caressed Angel's face. She leaned her head into his touch, knowing that she would never feel it again, never know the warmth of Matt's caress, never feel the softness of his lips on hers.

The sound of a throat being cleared behind her brought Angel back to her senses. Lucas was warning her, and she'd better take heed. Taking a step backward, Angel smiled sadly at Matt, saying, "There's an old Irish blessing I once heard, Matt, that's perfect for this occasion:

*May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face.
And rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the hollow of His hand.*

Take care of my sister, Matt, and take care of yourself, too." Angel knew the words of the blessing were a lie. She and Matt would never meet again.

Ignoring the pain showing so clearly on her brother-in-law's face, Angel dropped to one knee, allowing her to look at her nephew at his own level. She knew how unhappy this parting would make Marcus. The two of them had been close since he was a baby, and he would not

accept her leaving easily.

Looking into her nephew's face, so like his father's, Angel could see she was right. Marcus was pouting and building up to a temper tantrum. His golden eyes were glowing, the glints of green becoming more prevalent as his fury built, just like Demon's eyes when she was angry.

Trying to stem the tide, Angel reached out and caressed her nephew's face. "Marcus..."

Before she could continue, Marcus interrupted her. "No! Don't say it. I don't want to hear it. You won't leave us. You can't!"

The little boy's words were yelled loudly, and Angel realized that Bubba and Harry had moved in closer, their weapons lifted in response to the emotions Marcus had unleashed with his words. Emotions that for some reason Lucas was either unable or unwilling to block.

The child was a strong empath; stronger than his mother now Demon had suppressed the Vorlon that fueled her powers. Marcus' anger and frustration rolled over everyone standing in front of the ship, fraying nerves already edgy with pain. Angel tried to quiet him, aware that Matt had passed Mattie to Demon, and he was now stepping forward to try and restrain his son.

"Marcus, please, don't..." Angel tried to soothe her nephew but he was beyond calming. He was in a full blown seven year old temper tantrum, and his rage found a target in the man standing behind Angel.

Marcus' blazing golden eyes turned on Lucas, and the child seemed unaware of his father's hands on his shoulders, or of his mother and his aunt trying to calm him, as he screamed at the focus of all his hatred.

"This is your fault! Why are you doing this? She doesn't want to stay with you. She wants to come with us, but you won't let her. You're mean and you're horrible, and I wish my Dad had a big gun so he could shoot you dead! You may look like my Dad, but he's good and you're bad and you're nasty and you should leave my Auntie Angel alone!" Tears steamed down Marcus' face as he yelled, struggling in his father's grip, trying to break loose so he could physically attack Lucas. All the while the little boy's rage was washing over them all, heightening tensions further.

Angel tried to quiet Marcus, but then she felt herself being pulled backwards, away from her nephew, and into Lucas' arms. Demon was now kneeling at her son's side, trying to calm him, while Mattie cried into her mother's shoulder. Matt stood behind his family, hanging onto his son's shoulders, but when Angel looked at Matt's face, she could see he agreed with every word Marcus had spoken. She knew that if Matt *had* held a gun in his hand at that moment, Lucas would be dead.

Lucas' soft drawl somehow made itself heard clearly above Marcus' screaming, and for a moment Angel hoped he would say something to diffuse the situation, to calm Marcus and assuage his fears. When she heard his words, her heart fell. She should have known Lucas better than that.

"Son, you think your Daddy's so great, don't you? Well, let me tell you something about your hero of a Daddy."

Angel looked up and saw the sneer on Lucas' lips. She knew he was going to make everything worse, and she desperately tried to divert him. "Lucas, please. Leave it; he's just a child..."

He ignored her and forged on. "I want Angel to come with me; that's true enough. I want her by my side and I want her with me always. But I only want *her*. Unlike your father, who can't make up his mind whose bed he wants to sleep in. The galactic hero, Matthew Gideon, who cheats on his wife with her sisters. Such a great father and role model for you, son. You follow his lead and remember; it doesn't matter who you fuck, as long as you keep it in the family."

Lucas curled his lip into a sneering smile as he watched Gideon move Marcus to one side, then lunge forward. It was all going exactly to plan.

When Lucas had seen Gideon caress Angel's face, and watched the raven haired beauty's response, he'd felt the Rage rising within him, boiling his blood, demanding vengeance. He'd held it in check, waiting for the right moment, knowing that if he attacked Gideon immediately, it could drive Angel from him. So he'd bided his time, holding the fury deep within him, where it roiled and writhed, struggling for release.

The opportunity presented by Marcus' temper tantrum was too good to miss. Lucas had deliberately left the child's projection of anger unblocked, allowing it to wash over everyone standing in front of the ship, increasing tensions and raising tempers already set to blow. Marcus' insults gave Lucas exactly what he needed. Now he could verbally abuse Gideon, goading him into the physical attack Lucas wanted him to make. With Gideon taking the offensive, Lucas could strike him in self-defense, without risking Angel's wrath. Well, she'd still be angry when Lucas broke Gideon's jaw, but she'd be able to see that Lucas had been left with no choice but to defend himself.

Lucas lifted his fist, ready to pound Gideon into the ground, as his descendant surged forward, all according to plan. What happened next was *not* according to plan. What happened next took Lucas by surprise as much as anyone else, and for an instant left him paralyzed with shock.

The shot that came from behind Lucas and to his right, hit Gideon high on the left side of his chest, sending him flying backwards, crashing to the ground in front of Demon and the children. The sight of his enemy being swept off his feet had frozen Lucas, but the crash as he hit the ground released him.

Turning to his right he saw Bubba's terrified expression as the henchman recognized the fury on his boss' face. "You idiot! Did I tell you to shoot him? What the fuck made you do that?"

Bubba started to burble, "He was attacking you, Boss. I thought..."

Lucas interrupted him viciously. "You thought? You have to have a brain to think, moron, and you never had one of those! Now get into that ship and get the doctor. And bring Lily, too! Make sure Matheson stays with the kids."

Lucas' brain went into over-drive as he turned back to see that Angel had flung herself at Gideon's prostrate body and she was now leaning over him, trying to staunch the flow of

blood from his wound with her skirt. She whispered something to the prone man as she leaned forward, but Lucas couldn't hear what she said. The words were drowned by the screaming of Gideon's children as they watched their father dying in front of them.

Demon knelt on the ground, holding both children close to her. Her face was white and frozen, and Lucas wondered if she might faint, as she stared with enormous eyes at her husband's body. The tall blonde was shaking so hard that Lucas wondered how she was keeping a grip on her children, but he was glad she did. He didn't need them under his feet.

At that moment, the sound of feet running down the ramp from the ship dragged Lucas' attention away from the shocked women. Seeing Luke running toward him, he gestured down at Gideon. "Here, Doc. Do whatever you have to. Tell me what you need to save him."

Angel looked up at Lucas in shock, obviously unable to believe what she'd heard. Did she really think Lucas wanted Gideon to die? Well, yes, he did, but not here and now. Not when Angel would blame him for the death.

Turning away, he waved at Lily. "Go help your sister." Lily's face was nearly as white as Demon's but she nodded sharply and ran to her sister's side. Lucas was grateful for the tiny red-head's quick wits, and watched for a second as she knelt at Demon's side, taking Mattie from her sister's frozen arms and hugging the little girl as she cried. Demon still held Marcus against her body, tightly enough so that both mother and child were shaking as they watched Luke Raven start working on Gideon.

Luke had brought his medical kit with him, and he gently moved Angel's bloodied hands out of the way so he could rip away Gideon's shirt and start working on the wound. Lucas heard the doctor's sharp intake of breath as he saw the extent of the injury. It obviously wasn't good. Luke started to pull instruments and dressings from his kit, instructing Angel in what he needed her to do, as he ripped aside Gideon's burned jacket and went to work.

After a few moments in which the only sound was the children's sobbing, Lucas asked quietly, "Is there anything else you need, Doc?"

Luke looked up, his eyes devastated, as he shook his head and whispered, "A miracle. Can you do that, Lucas? Because if you can't, he's going to die, and there's nothing I can do about it. The damage is just too severe. He's going to bleed to death, and soon."

A quick glance over at Demon was enough to assure Lucas that she hadn't heard Luke's grim prognosis, but a quiet moan of despair from Angel made it apparent that she'd heard every word, as she continued to assist the doctor.

Lucas cursed quietly to himself. It wasn't supposed to end this way. This wasn't his plan at all. If Gideon died now, Angel would never forgive Lucas, and never willingly give him the heir he needed. And having watched his father die at the hands of Lucas' henchman, Marcus would never be turned, would never become what Lucas needed him to be. It was all slipping away, and it was all because of that stupid buffoon, Bubba.

Turning to see Bubba and Harry standing nearby, watching as Gideon died in front of them, Lucas snarled, "Get him out of here. I'll deal with him later." Harry nodded nervously and dragged a white-faced Bubba back toward the castle.

Lucas turned back to Luke with a sigh. If only he'd brought the alien healing device with him, he could have given that to Luke to use, letting everyone present give some of their life-force to Gideon to save his life. But the device wasn't on Eriadne. It was back on Regula IV, where it was of no use to anyone. Lucas knew that he was going to have to deal with this himself, but there would be a price to be paid in pain, a price he really didn't want to pay, not to save Gideon of all people. He just didn't have any other options open to him.

Moving over to stand behind Angel, Lucas said quietly, "Move aside, Angel. Let me help."

Angel looked up at him and almost snarled, "Help? What help can you give, Lucas? You only know how to hurt, how to destroy. You couldn't possibly help."

Lucas laughed softly, and pulled Angel to her feet. "There you go, underestimating me again. You're gonna have to get over that, darlin'. Now go help your sisters." He nodded to where Lily and Demon kneeled on the ground. Marcus was now sobbing, shaking his mother, trying to rouse her from the shock that had drained the color from her face and made her tremble with fear.

Angel gave Lucas a look of loathing, but she did as he'd ordered and went to help Marcus with his mother. Lucas kneeled by Gideon's right side, careful to avoid the pool of blood slowly spreading out from beneath the dying man's back. He noted dispassionately that the PPG shot must have penetrated Gideon's upper chest, piercing his lung, probably smashing his shoulder-blade, and almost certainly severing the axillary artery, based on the amount of blood Gideon was losing. Lucas' knowledge of anatomy was limited, but he knew how to kill a man, and cutting a main artery was one quick way of doing it.

"Move your hands, Doc." Lucas gave the command brusquely. He needed access to the wound if he was going to save Gideon's life. He knew it was going to hurt, but he had little choice. A small part of Lucas' brain cursed Gideon. [I couldn't do this for anyone else here, except MY son, you lucky bastard. You're gonna owe me big time for this.]

Luke looked surprised but followed Lucas' command, moving his hands away from the injury. Lucas took a deep breath and placed both his hands over the wound, covering it completely. Then he closed his eyes and concentrated.

The pain was immediate and intense. Lucas gritted his teeth and carried on, ignoring the searing, stabbing sensation in his left shoulder, focusing all his energies on doing what had to be done. He heard Luke's sharp intake of breath as he saw what was happening, accompanied by a whispered, "What the hell...?"

Lucas didn't let the doctor's surprise distract him. He was feeling weaker with every second that passed, but he knew he couldn't stop yet. The wound wasn't sealed, and even though the blood loss had reduced from a flood to a trickle, Lucas knew it had to be stopped completely, or Gideon could still die. His hands started to tremble with the effort of the healing, as he continued to pour his own life-force into the wounded man.

As he weakened, Lucas found that an image formed behind his closed eyes. An image of a woman he had not allowed himself to think about for centuries. The image of his mother. She seemed to be smiling at him, and he felt as if she somehow gave him the strength he needed to carry on. This was the source of his healing talent. It had come from his mother, who like the witches, had possessed her own power, making her an obvious target for Lucas' father when

he'd needed to sire his own heir. Lucas had inherited the gift from his mother, just as he'd inherited the ability to host the Rage from his father, but his healing skills were restricted. He hadn't been able to use them to heal Angel when she was sick. Then he had been forced to use the alien healing device. There were few who could receive the benefit of Lucas' only constructive power. Gideon was one of the lucky few.

Lucas finally sat back on his heels, his head dropped to his chest, as he heaved for every breath. The pain in his left shoulder was agonizing, and he hadn't felt so drained since he had healed Angel, but he forced his head up and his eyes open as he heard Luke's voice say softly, "That's amazing. How did you do that?"

Giving a smile that was more than half a sneer, Lucas said, equally softly, "Magic, Doc. You believe in magic, don't you? You should do, being married to Lily and all."

Using his right arm to help push himself to his feet--his left arm was completely paralyzed, and would remain that way for days--Lucas turned to where the three sisters kneeled, huddled together around the two children. The children had both stopped crying, and now watched Lucas warily, their large golden eyes trained on him with a mixture of apprehension and awe. Demon looked up at him, too. Somehow she must have sensed what Lucas had done, as some color had returned to her cheeks and her eyes filled with tears as she whispered, "Thank you."

Demon scrambled to her feet and rushed to her husband's side. Kneeling quickly, she lifted Matthew's head gently, laying it on her knees as she looked up at Luke, questioning him silently. Luke nodded and smiled, confirming what Demon had already guessed. "He's going to live, Demon. I don't know how, but he's going to live."

Demon looked down at her husband's still face and stroked his hair. She had known the instant the PPG shot hit Matthew that his wound was fatal. She had felt his pain and shock, felt his fear, felt him slide into a coma, and felt his spirit draining from him. The part of her that had known Matthew was still alive on Inesbitrin, when everyone else had been convinced he was dead, had felt him begin to die, right in front of her frozen eyes.

It had taken all the strength that Demon possessed not to slip into unconsciousness along with Matthew; not to allow herself to slide down to death by his side. She had clung to her children, to give herself the will to live. Without the touch of Mattie's body and Marcus' mind it would have been so easy to give into despair, to let go, to join Matthew in the darkness into which he had descended. But her children had given her the strength she'd needed to go on; the strength to face the possibility of a life not worth living--a life without Matthew. So she had somehow remained upright, albeit on her knees, holding herself rigidly conscious, unable to move or speak. Every ounce of willpower in body had been devoted to taking one breath after another; to staying alive.

Pushing the memory of that moment aside, Demon leaned forward and gently kissed Matthew's forehead, whispering, "Sleep. Sleep until you're well again." The warmth of his skin under her lips was everything Demon needed to reassure her that Matthew was going to live.

For those few dreadful minutes she had thought she'd lost him. She'd held onto Mattie and Marcus, unable to move, unable to think or feel anything other than her husband's life bleeding out of him. She had hardly been aware of Lily arriving at her side and taking Mattie from

her, barely sensed Marcus' attempts to link with her, as he felt the depth of her shock and despair.

Now Demon looked up at her son, held tightly in Angel's arms, and she sent to them both, *[[He's all right. He's going to be all right.]]* Tears streamed down her face as she laughed aloud, laying her fingers on Matthew's neck, feeling the strong pulse that beat there, reassuring her that her husband would live.

Demon looked up to see Lucas standing over her. His left arm seemed to hang a little oddly at his side, and lines of pain were etched into his face. She reached out with her senses, and tried to feel what he was feeling, trying to understand what he had done, but he blocked her effortlessly.

Lucas shook his head and gave a one-sided smile. "Tsk, ts. You know that ain't allowed." He then looked at Luke and went on, "Tell my men what you need to get him into the ship. I want you people out of here before anything else goes wrong."

He turned to leave, but Demon reached up and took his right hand before he could move. Lucas almost flinched at her touch, but he paused and looked down at her, frowning. Demon wiped her face with her free hand, then said softly, "I don't know what you did, and I have no idea how you did it, but thank you. Thank you for saving Matthew's life."

Lucas shook his hand free. "I didn't do it for you or for him." His eyes shifted and Demon followed his gaze to where Angel was hugging Marcus, wiping the little boy's tears away and telling him that everything was going to be all right. Demon knew then why Lucas had saved Matthew. If Matthew had died, Angel would never have forgiven him. This way, Angel would feel even more obligated to stay with Lucas.

Demon sighed. Nothing had really changed. She was still losing her sister, but at least she wasn't going to lose her husband, too. The tall blonde leaned forward and kissed Matthew's forehead again, then watched as Luke gave orders for a stretcher to be brought from the infirmary.

Lucas walked over to Angel and Marcus, and held out his hand. Angel nodded and released the little boy, pushing him gently in Demon's direction. "Go to your mother, Marcus. She needs you."

Marcus rushed across and Demon held out her free arm, hugging her son to her, kissing him and linking to him mentally, reassuring him as she watched Lucas put his right arm around Angel's shoulder. It was a gesture of ownership, of possession, and Demon sighed again. No, nothing had changed at all, but at least Matthew would live.

Angel stood watching as her family boarded their flyer. Luke and one of Lucas' men carefully carried the stretcher that held Gideon's unconscious form between

them. Demon, pale faced and shattered, followed close behind, holding Mattie in one arm, while she held Marcus' hand. Angel's heart broke at the distraught face of her nephew as he walked silently beside his mother, with Lily holding his other small hand.

Panic began to well up inside Angel as she watched them all disappear inside the ship. Her thoughts and feelings ran amok inside her. She desperately wanted to run after them, to go with them, but she knew that was impossible. Even though she was standing on an open plain, Angel felt as if walls were closing in around her, threatening to suffocate her.

Feeling a hand on her shoulder, she glanced behind her and found Lucas watching her, his expression hard and controlled, his eyes silently warning her to not try anything. Angel knew if she tried to make a run for it, Lucas would stop her and if not him, one of his men, who stood at the bottom of the flyer's ramp, silently herding her family inside and making sure none of them tried to turn back to Angel.

Pulling away from Lucas' touch, Angel took a jerky step forward. Every sound, even the wind, seemed to suddenly disappear as the ship's engines kicked into life. Holding her breath and fighting back the desire to scream, "Don't go! Please don't leave me!" Angel watched as the ship slowly began to lift from the ground.

Barely breathing, Angel watched the craft rise higher and higher. Utter loneliness began to fill Angel's heart. Her family was leaving her, and once again she would be parted from them. Hot, stinging tears began to flow freely and Angel let out a strangled sound of pain and despair.

The flyer grew smaller and smaller as the distance increased and Angel could feel her bond to her sisters diminishing. She closed her eyes and focused as hard as she could, trying to establish a link with Demon, and through her to Lily, before it was gone completely. Angel wasn't sure if she had succeeded but she sent one last thought to them before the ship disappeared.

[[I'll always love you. Blessed be, my darling sisters!]] With that final thought, Angel felt a tearing in her mind. It didn't hurt as much as it had when Lucas had broken their link before, but Angel was left in no doubt. Her last mental link to her sister was gone. In the silence that followed, Angel felt her strength shattering. Opening her eyes, she sobbed as the ship finally disappeared from sight completely.

"Angel-face?" called Lucas softly, breaking into Angel's despair.

She turned around to face him, her face red and her eyes glaring, "Don't you dare say anything to me. Not now!"

Lucas frowned and was about to say something else, but Angel screamed. "No!" Then she turned and fled.

Angel didn't stop running until she reached Lucas' quarters. Her breathing came out in hard, ragged heaves. She leaned back against the door, trying to regain her breath and to slow the beating of her heart.

Finally, her breathing returned to normal and memories of what had happened flooded back. Lifting her hands, Angel surveyed them. She felt her stomach turn at the sickening sight of Gideon's blood caking her fingers. Shaking, she looked down at her clothes; they too were stained crimson.

"Oh sweet Goddess," whispered Angel in shock.

Like a woman possessed, she stripped out of her clothes and ran to stuff them into the garbage disposal unit. Then she rushed into the bathroom and running the water, she lathered her hands with soap and began to scrub away the blood. Her hands stung as she scrubbed harder and harder, the dried blood washing into the basin and mixing with the water.

Angel could hear herself crying and laughing strangely, but she couldn't stop herself as she continued washing her hands, even when they were clean.

"Out, damned spot! Out, I say!" Angel heard herself quoting, and suddenly she stopped herself, the crying and near hysterical laughter dying in her throat.

Taking a deep breath, she stopped scrubbing at her hands and stared at her reflection in the mirror. She hardly recognized the pale face and red, haunted eyes that stared back at her. Taking a deep breath, she forced a wave of calmness to wash over her. Bending down, Angel washed her face, the cold water soothing her hot, tear stained face. When she straightened, she turned off the tap and dried her hands and face, and then she left the bathroom, somehow finding the strength to bring herself under control. Hysteria bubbled dangerously close to the surface, but for now, she had it contained.

Moving over to the wardrobe, Angel quickly chose something new and clean to wear. For a moment she flinched, as a flashback of Gideon's blood flickered through her mind. Shuddering and taking another calming breath, the dark haired witch told herself, "It's going to be OK. It was only blood and Matt's going to be OK." She kept whispering that to herself as she pulled on her clothes.

Once she was dressed, Angel moved over to the window and tried to come to terms with what had happened. She would be strong. She'd get through being separated from her family and abandoning the life she'd built on Earth, and she would survive the deal she'd made with Lucas--somehow.

{[Chapter 1](#)} {Chapter 2} {[Chapter 3](#)}

The Witches of Eriadne: Something Wicked this Way Comes

{[Part 1: The Gathering](#)} {[Part 2: Persuasion](#)} {[Part 3: Divisions](#)} {[Part 4: Regrets](#)} {[Part 5: Finale](#)}