

The Witches of Eriadne: Toil and Trouble - Part 2: Reunion

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Lucas and Angel

Chapter 2

Her eyes were closed as she lifted her face up to the sky, relishing the warmth of the sun on her face and body. The day was hot, but not unpleasantly so. A slight breeze blew, ruffling the loose strands of hair that had strayed from the clip holding it back. She raised a hand and lazily tucked away a strand that had blown across her face, tickling her nose. She smiled and took a deep breath, savoring the fragrance of jasmine that came with the breeze.

She opened her eyes, taking in the sights before her. The lake shimmered where the sun played on the ripples caused by the breeze. Several small rowboats drifted along, the sound of the oars plopping gently in the water, the occupants talking, laughing or just sitting quietly enjoying the peace of the lake. Large trees surrounded the shore, providing shade and creating interesting patterns on the surface.

The sound of children laughing behind her drew her away from her silent observation of the lake. She smiled as she watched two children playing with a kite that danced and moved on the air currents. She watched them for a moment and then let her eyes move around the park. Everyone was happy and enjoying the mild summer day. A young couple sat on a blanket to her right, enjoying a picnic. She

could see that they were in love, the way they leant closely towards each other and whispered, oblivious to the rest of the world. There was a young boy playing with a puppy while his parents stood laughing and watching. Some people were just walking, or jogging or like her sitting on a bench lost in thought or talking with a companion.

Angel sighed, she felt so content and relaxed. She could stay sitting here forever; just watching and enjoying the goings on around her. In fact she had been enjoying it so much that she had almost... almost forgotten that she was here waiting for him. Angel's smile turned into a grin as she looked at the watch on her slim wrist. It was almost time, he would be here soon.

She stood up and smoothed the creases from the long pale blue summer dress. Oblivious to the appreciative look she got from a jogger who came running past, she raised her hand to smooth away stray strands of hair. She lowered her hand and turned. Her heart and pulse were suddenly beating faster with joy and excitement as she saw him approaching.

Angel stood letting her eyes feast on the sight of him. He was the sexiest and most gorgeous man she'd ever seen or would ever know. She let her eyes move over his body, loving how he looked in the black jeans that fit him snugly; the long sleeved white shirt and the black suede vest. Her breath caught in her throat when she looked up and his hazel eyes met hers. When he smiled, it was all that Angel needed to make her run towards him.

She ran to him and flung herself into his waiting arms. She laughed as she placed her arms tightly around his neck and his came round her waist, holding her close. When she threw her head back to look at him, his mouth claimed hers in a kiss that was at first gentle as his tongue slipped between her parted lips and sought her tongue. But it deepened and became more passionate as their tongues meshed; he let go of her waist so that his hands could cup her face, pulling her deeper into the kiss.

Angel moaned softly and let one hand move into his hair, holding him closer to her. She felt drunk as the kiss deepened, loving the spicy taste of him as his tongue danced with her. After what felt like an eternity, they broke the kiss. She looked up into his eyes, and returned the smile that he was giving her. His hands moved from her face to once again hold her round the waist. She let her arms drop, to slip around his waist and she leaned into him, letting her head rest on his shoulder as he held her close to him.

Angel closed her eyes, breathing in the spicy musk that was unique to him. This was real happiness to her, being held in his arms like this. Feeling safe and warm. She sighed contentedly

"Oh, Matthew, I'm so happy," whispered Angel as she snuggled against his shoulder.

"Not Matthew, darlin'... Lucas."

Angel came awake with a start. Her heart was racing and her breathing ragged from fright, her mind spinning at what she'd just dreamed. It had been so vivid, so real. She threw aside the blanket and swung her legs off the edge of the bed, sitting there trying to get her heart to slow down.

"What the hell was that?" She asked anxiously. Unlike a lot of dreams, on waking she was able to remember every detail. The last part had her seriously unnerved. She continued to sit on the edge of the bed, her arms wrapped around her as she thought about the dream.

In her dream she hadn't thought anything odd about where she was. But now she did, where had she been? Why in the dream did she seem to know, but now she didn't? What was it with the clothes that

they'd all been wearing? She closed her eyes, letting herself remember the dress she'd been wearing. It had been pale blue, [I never wear blue,] and that wasn't the only odd thing. It was in a style that, well, was old-fashioned. Angel thought for a moment about the style ... and it hit her. The clothes that she and the other people in the park had been wearing were late 20th century style.

"Very weird," she said out loud.

She continued to sit there for a moment trying to figure it out. But then her thoughts started drifting to what had caused her to wake up. She'd been dreaming that she was meeting with Gideon, and that they had embraced and kissed. That in itself was odd, how she felt about him in the dream. She could have sworn that what she was feeling was love for the man who held her. But that wasn't possible, [or was it?] Angel shook her head, not wanting to think too much on the answer to that question. Then she focused on the last moment of her dream. How she'd said 'Matthew' and how she was happy, and then she'd heard that familiar drawl "Not Matthew, darlin'... Lucas." And she'd woken up.

Angel didn't want to admit it to herself, but she knew what the dream was about, what it had to be about. Since Gideon had returned, she'd been unable to stop herself thinking about Lucas, and how although Gideon wasn't Lucas, she'd often looked at him and been reminded strongly of him. She wished silently, despite her determination to get over and forget Lucas, that Gideon was Lucas.

Angel ran a hand over her face, rubbing her forehead as she tried to reason away the dream. She was angry with herself, it was abundantly clear that she couldn't get away from the whole Gideon/Lucas thing. Now even in her dreams, she was having Gideon become Lucas. She snorted and stood up. She was hopeless. Angel gave a dry laugh and looked down at her bed.

"Great, now I won't be able to get back to sleep." Angel walked to the loveseat and sat down. She wished she could be surprised at the dream, although it had given her a fright and brought her awake, but she wasn't. Considering how much time she'd spent thinking and struggling with it, trying to deny it, trying to forget about it, was it any surprise that her subconscious threw her thoughts and desires back at her in a dream?

And it was just a dream, Angel knew that. Gideon would never be Lucas, and although she'd wished that he were, she also knew that she didn't want him to be. And Lucas? Lucas was gone. Angel growled in irritation at herself. Would she ever be able to stop going around in circles, chasing her tail with these thoughts? She closed her eyes, and took in a deep breath, letting it out slowly as she leaned back in her seat. She knew the answer to that, and it didn't make her happy.

Angel opened her eyes and looked at the book lying on the table beside the loveseat. She reached for it and opened it to the place she had bookmarked. She knew she wouldn't be able to get back to sleep, and she had to do something to stop herself from thinking about the dream. Reading always distracted her.

It took a few tries but after awhile, Angel got into the book and all she could think about was the wonderful story she was reading.

Luke, Lily and John were cuddled up together in Lily's lounging pit, enjoying just being together in the aftermath of early morning love, while outside the sun was rising.

Suddenly Luke sighed. For once he was lying in the middle instead of Lily, who lay to his left inside the semi-circle of his arm, her head and left hand on his chest, while John lay on his back to Luke's right, their sides touching.

Lily lifted her head. "Relieved it's over?"

Luke looked down into her sparkling emerald eyes. [Will I ever look into her eyes and not be drawn into their depths? I hope not.] He tucked an errant red lock behind her ear and smiled. "I doubt that will ever happen. No, I was just remembering that this was supposed to be a working vacation ... and at the end of these two weeks we'll have to present some results to Earth Government. Which means that someone has to work while everyone else enjoys their holiday ... and since Earth Gov'll want a justification for my coming along with the Excalibur's crew..."

"That someone is you." John finished his sentence. He turned to his side and leaned his head on his hand, giving him an affectionate grin.

"Unfortunately, yes." Luke shrugged and looked at Lily. "I'd like to go to the infirmary after breakfast, if that's OK with you ... I'll need your help, though. I know Angel is the expert..."

Lily smiled sadly. "Of course I'll help you. We all know how the equipment works."

"And what can I do?" John asked.

"Well, you could take notes if you like," Raven said. "I just hope you won't be bored to death - It will probably be the same for you as it would be for me listening to you and Gideon talk about a ship's technology."

John grinned and said, "Somehow, I doubt anyone will get bored," throwing Lily a meaningful look.

An hour later, Lily and Raven were examining a scanning device that could detect pathogenic agents and at the same time clean them from the body of the sick person. Lily said the energy beam doing this didn't have any side effects, but they only used it in very bad cases and if nothing else helped.

"Sometimes it's better if the body goes through a disease without interference." John was typing all of this information into a data pad, hoping this or one of the other devices would prove useful in their fight against the plague.

When they'd finished examining the device, Lily put it back in its place, and they went to a rack that contained some diagnostic equipment which the Excalibur's crew hadn't catalogued during their last visit.

When Lily bent down to put a scanner they had just talked about back onto a low shelf, Luke couldn't help but notice her cleavage, and how the blue dress with softly shimmering green highlights flowed smoothly around her body. It was made of the same fabric, flowing and curled at the edges, as the one she had worn the first time they had been here, the day she had taken him on the window seat outside her room... [Stop it! You've got work to do!]

Lily now had her back turned to him and squatted down to get another piece of equipment, her ass brushing against his crotch. He could feel his cock twitch and closed his eyes momentarily. [Please, have mercy...] When he opened them again, he noticed Matheson, who was standing beside him, trying

to stifle a grin. Before Luke could react, Lily got up again, leaning back further than she normally would because of the added weight of the babies, and brushed against his crotch again. He gave up trying to rein in the hormones that were messing him up, and softly pulled her towards him instead, letting her feel the bulge in his pants.

Lily gasped slightly as she felt his erection press against her back, then said, "Why Doctor, what a big thermometer you have."

John wasn't even trying to hide his grin anymore.

"All the better for taking your temperature. Now where shall we put it?" Luke murmured into her ear.

Lily let out a soft purr that sent Luke's and John's blood racing and turned around inside Luke's embrace, her right arm snaking around his neck as her eyes met his. "I could make some suggestions." Suddenly she stepped to the side and back, pulling Luke with her until she stood directly in front of John, pressing her body against his and reaching back to pull him towards her as he automatically closed his arms around her. She could feel his cock grow hard as her long fingernails raked his tight ass through the pants.

Lily's eyes were still locked with Raven's. "I thought you wanted to work, Doctor?"

He knew she didn't have the least intention of sending him back to work; her eyes were burning with passion. "I do intend to work ... hard."

Lily leaned her head back onto Matheson's chest, licking her lips expectantly. "Well, then, work ... Doctor."

[I never imagined it possible to make the word "Doctor" sound so sexy,] Luke thought as he bent down to kiss their red-headed temptress - he never thought of her as "mine", always as "ours".

It was a deep, passionate kiss, and when Luke finally came up for air, he pushed Lily and John towards a nearby desk. "If you 'd like to get undressed now..."

Lily smiled as she reached behind her back and opened the clasp of the belt that held her dress together beneath her breasts, letting it fall to the floor. She shrugged the dress off her shoulders, Luke's eyes following as it floated down along her body, revealing her beauty once more.

John had already taken off his t-shirt, but paused to watch Lily undress. He could feel the blood rush into his groin at the sight of her naked body, knowing his hard-on was just as obvious as Luke's. He hurried to get the rest of his clothes off.

Luke let his eyes wander over his lovers' bodies, still fully dressed himself. He leaned towards John and whispered something into his ear, lightly touching his shoulder. When he leaned back again John smiled and nodded, and Luke placed a soft kiss on his mouth before stepping back and leaning against the nearest rack, crossing his arms and watching.

John stepped behind Lily, sliding his arms around her waist and softly caressing her swollen belly as he traced kisses along her shoulder and neck. She moaned, rubbing her pelvis against his erection. He bent his knees and let his hard cock slip between her legs, feeling how wet and soft she was, and gasped as she pressed her legs together and started moving her hips along his shaft.

John whispered something into her ear, and she smiled lasciviously and nodded. John sat down on the desk, pulling her up onto his lap, her back to him, then lifted her up, her hands pushing against his thighs to support some of her weight as his cock pushed against the tight opening of her ass. He let her sink down slowly, carefully, until he was inside leaning back, and moved her hips, soon closing her eyes, ecstatic.

Suddenly, she felt lips softly close around her hard nipple, and opened her eyes to see Luke bent over her body, sucking her breast. His arms closed around her, hands caressing her back, making her shiver. She transferred her weight to her left arm and tugged at Luke's hair with her right hand, unable to speak, until he let go of her breast and looked up. Her mouth was open, lips trembling, desperate for him to cover them with his, and he eagerly complied, entering her mouth with his tongue. Lily felt his trapped erection press against her wet labia, making her moan.

Luke leaned back slightly, eyes burning as he looked at her, a teasing grin on his lips. "Impatient?"

Instead of answering, Lily sat up and opened the buttons of his shirt, never ceasing to move her hips. She pulled the fabric to the side, revealing his smooth, almost hairless chest, and closed her lips around one of his nipples. Luke gasped as she bit down on it. She kissed the pain away, then traced kisses up his neck, along his chin, reaching down and opening his pants' zipper, releasing his rigid shaft and stroking it, enjoying his quickened breathing.

Suddenly Luke pulled her hand away, panting and giving her a promising smile. He motioned for her to lean back again, and when she did, pushed into her wet, hot core, entering her completely in a single thrust. John moaned softly as he felt Luke's shaft touch his through the thin wall separating them. For a moment all three of them were motionless, the calm before the storm, then Lily started moving her hips again, slowly, increasing the rhythm as her pulse quickened more and more. Lily felt John's hands on her breast, her belly, Luke's caressing her back, his mouth grazing her neck. She came with a loud cry, throwing her head back, pushing both men over the edge, feeling their hot essence fill her.

Lily lifted her hips, letting John's and Luke's shafts slip out of her, and sank back onto the desk beside John, snuggling up to him. Luke let himself fall down beside her, his cheek on hers. All three of them were panting heavily.

When her breathing had become a little calmer, Lily said, "Well, Doc, if you ever need someone to confirm you can work hard, let me know..."

John chuckled. "Just be careful you don't have him overwork himself. We still need him to help us with your equipment."

Luke pushed himself up on his elbow, rolling his eyes and glaring at John. "Did you have to remind me? Well, now live with the consequences - back to work!"

Gideon and Deborah were breakfasting on her terrace. They'd slept in late after a night during which sleep had been intermittent. Gideon hadn't felt this good in years. He was tired but thoroughly sated ... for the moment. One thing he'd discovered was that being around Deborah kept him in permanent state of semi-arousal. He hadn't felt like this since he was about 14 when anything could set him off and he walked with a permanent limp. Given half a chance he'd have happily spent his entire vacation in her bed, as long as she was there with him.

He was enjoying the slight breeze on his face as he drank juice and ate the local bread and cereal while watching her. She was half dozing in the sunshine, as tired but happy as he was, leaning back in her chair with her face turned up to catch the warmth of the sun. Her hands rested on the swelling of her stomach, cradling her bump protectively. He was almost overwhelmed by a wave of affection for her and a desire to protect her and his son from ... well, whatever they needed protecting from. He couldn't think of a damn thing at the moment. He snorted to himself at his stereotypical male response to a pregnant woman.

She heard the noise he made and opened her eyes, turning to smile at him. "What?"

"Oh, nothing, just feeling the need to go out and kill some defenseless animal so I can bring home meat to the cave." He smiled back.

She laughed at him. "I wouldn't try it on this planet. There's no such thing as a defenseless animal; they all have teeth and claws. Even most of the plants can bite. Being a vegetarian round here can be dangerous dietary choice!"

"Hell, I was hoping that I could go shoot some poor little bunny rabbit and lay it at your feet to show you what a good provider I am. I wasn't planning on doing anything dangerous." He reached out for her hand and kissed her palm.

"You leave our pet bunny alone or you'll have llas out for your blood! She loves that animal; named it Thumper and every so often she tries to change into a very large companion for it. Frightens the life out of the poor little bugger. Then she gets cross with me when I call her Harvey." Gideon was laughing so much he didn't see her move until she sat on his knee and put her mouth to his ear. "What's up, doc? Is that a carrot you've got in your pocket or are you pleased to see me?"

"You know, I have no idea what you're talking about half the time, but I love it anyway. But let me just get one thing straight." He pulled her closer to him. "That ain't no carrot you can feel, that's a cucumber and it's looking for a home." He pulled her head down to his, kissing her slowly and thoroughly. When she pulled her head back he looked up at her and asked, "What do you want to do today? I couldn't persuade you just to go back to bed could I?" He stroked her belly gently where it pressed against her robe. "You didn't get a lot of sleep last night; maybe you should rest some more."

Deborah laughed. "Oh and I'll get a lot of rest if I let you take me back there won't I? No, I have plans for today. I want to go through the library and see what you'd like to take with you this time. I don't know why you brought all the books back, they were supposed to be a gift not a loan."

Gideon flinched when she mentioned the library, but tried not to let her see his discomfort. "I've read just about everything I took away with me and hoped you'd let me have some more. But if I try to keep all the ones I already have and take more, I'll have to move out of my quarters and sleep on the bridge."

"Of course you can take more, whatever you want. In fact I've something special I've dug out for you. I'll show you later. Now, we should get dressed and I want to take a bath first." She stood and leaned down to kiss him gently. "Join me?"

He stood and followed her back into her rooms.

They entered the library through the large double doors, walking into the centre of the room where the

stained glass windows created pools of colour on the floor. Several large stacks of books were piled high on the central table. Gideon was trying hard not to remember what had happened the last time he'd been in this room and was grateful that Deborah could no longer read his feelings. He'd have hated to have to explain what was going on in his head at that moment.

Deborah led him to the table and selected a book from the first pile. "I watched what you chose last time and tried to find more books that I thought might interest you. But this one's special. I want you to keep this one, even if you bring all the others back. This is just for you." She passed him the book.

He looked down and saw that she had given him a first edition, mint copy of 'The Once and Future King'. The story of King Arthur and his sword Excalibur.

"Deborah! I can't take this; it's worth a fortune." He couldn't take his eyes from the book, holding it gently, not wanting to mark it in any way.

"Maybe it's worth something somewhere, but not here. Most of the books in this library will never even be touched. That's not right; books should be read. I know how much you'll enjoy having this. Please take it." He put the book down carefully then pulled her towards him. Holding her close he kissed her forehead.

"Thank you. I only wish I had a gift for you that you'd enjoy as much." She smiled at him and stood back.

"You gave me the best gift anyone has ever given me, nearly five months ago." She rested her hand on her stomach and looked lovingly down at the bulge in her clothes. Gideon wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close again, stroking her hair and holding her tightly.

Angel stood in the shadows of a bookcase on the upper level of the library. She'd been there before Gideon and Demon arrived. When they entered she automatically drew back into the shadows, hiding herself from their view. She'd managed to avoid seeing anyone from the Excalibur other than Galen. She knew that she couldn't avoid them all for the whole of their visit, but the longer she could stay away from Gideon the better off she'd be. She didn't want to be reminded of what she'd lost and Gideon was a constant reminder. Every time she looked at him she thought of Lucas.

She hoped that Demon and Gideon would leave quickly. She felt a flash of resentment that they'd invaded her privacy; she often retreated to the library these days. The memories the place brought to her were a heady mix of pain and pleasure, but at least she felt at peace here. This was a place she'd never been with Lucas. Here she could almost forget him.

She watched as Demon gave the book to Gideon. Their words tore her apart. She could only contrast the gentle way in which Gideon held Demon with the way he'd treated her in the same room. His obvious affection for Demon, with his disgust and contempt for her. She wanted to scream at the unfairness of it. Why should he love Demon and not her? She didn't care that she wasn't sure whether she wanted Gideon or Lucas; she just knew that she wanted to be loved in the way that Gideon loved Demon.

Only her pride kept her from screaming her pain at them. She held it all close inside her and glided to the nearest door in the upper level, letting herself out noiselessly and closing the door behind her without a sound. Never knowing that she'd been watched from the moment she'd entered the room.

Galen had been first to arrive in the library that morning. He'd spent the night prowling the castle, looking at every room, picture and most of all at the tapestries. The whole place induced a constant state of nausea in him. Every nerve was on edge; he was prepared for attack from every doorway. He knew his reaction was irrational but all his training since childhood led him to believe that this place was haunted by evil. He reached the library at dawn and found it a haven of tranquility. Although he could feel that the enemy had touched everything in the room, he knew that they hadn't made the books, only stolen them. The books themselves were of human making and therefore neutral. He found a chair amongst the book stacks and dozed.

He awoke when Angel entered the room. Although she moved noiselessly, her presence was enough to disturb his sleep. He didn't move from his chair in the shadows but watched her as she drifted between the shelves in the upper level, admiring the grace of her movements and the perfection of her body, displayed clearly by the red leather tunic and pants she wore. The tunic was short, stopping just below her breasts leaving her midriff bare. He felt his cock stir at the sight of her and fiercely suppressed his reaction.

He heard the door opening and the voices from below. Moving carefully, in total silence, he placed himself where he could see Angel above, Matthew and Demon below, while remaining unseen himself. He saw Angel's expression as she listened and watched; could see the pain she felt and longed to reach out to comfort her. It took all his willpower not to follow her when she left. He looked down at where Matthew stood holding Demon closely. He had very mixed feelings about what he saw. On the one hand he was glad for his friend that he'd found someone to care for and someone who cared for him equally. On the other, his friend had fallen in love with a witch, an abomination, the tool of his enemy.

He left by the same door that Angel had used, equally unnoticed by the couple below.

Galen walked the corridors aimlessly, but somehow found himself drawn to Angel's rooms. He couldn't stop himself, he had to see her, had to offer what comfort he could. He arrived at her door, which he found slightly ajar. He stood listening for a moment, and heard the sound of sobbing from inside. He pushed the door open silently and saw Angel lying in a heap on the floor in front of the empty fireplace. She was curled around a large cushion, hugging it to herself as she wept.

He rushed to her and swept her into his arms, holding her close and rocking her as she cried. She turned her head into his shoulder and sobbed, her whole body shaking with the strength of her pain. He lifted her into his arms and carried her through to her bedroom where he placed her gently on the bed, still holding her close, not saying a word. He felt movement in his groin and knew that this time he couldn't fight it.

Gradually her tears ended and she stopped shaking, lying unmoving against him. He lifted her head up with his hand under her chin, looking into her beautiful blue eyes, now red from weeping. He moved his hand to brush her cheeks dry, then leant down and kissed her swollen mouth, pulling her close against him, letting her feel how she'd affected him.

She went rigid in his arms and pushed herself away from him, almost falling off the far side of the bed in her effort to get away from him. She backed against the wall, looking at him in horror. He was stunned by the strength of her reaction and tried to reassure her.

"It's all right, I won't hurt you, I wouldn't ..." his voice trailed off as she reached for a book lying on the table next to her and flung it him, screaming.

"Get out! Get out of my room! I thought you were my friend, I thought you cared about me, but you're just like all the others, you just want to fuck me, you don't care about me, no one ever cares about me!" She was hysterical, grabbing everything she could reach and throwing it. He retreated in the face of her hostility, knowing that it was pointless to try to reason with her. She'd made her decision about him and nothing was going to change it. He left her in a worse state than he'd found her.

Angel stood for a moment leaning against the wall her chest heaving as she struggled to regain her breath. She rubbed the back of her hand roughly against her mouth trying to rub away the remnants of Galen's kiss, fighting the nausea in her stomach. She gave an anguished cry that came from the very depths of her body as she moved, flinging herself face down on her bed.

She felt sick and beaten down, the one man who she'd thought wanted nothing but friendship from her, who seem to be the only one who cared about how *she* felt, had just betrayed her. When he'd held her in his arms comforting her, she'd felt that here was someone who could understand her feelings about Demon and Gideon, but mostly about Gideon. She'd thought that when she finally managed to stop crying she could talk to him, get his advice. But then he'd kissed her proving to her that all that men wanted from her was sex. And now she realized that Galen's gentleness towards her had obviously just been about getting into her pants.

Angel buried her face in the thick quilt on her bed and sobbed. She wanted to be loved by a man. Not just for sex but truly loved, for her mind as well as her body. She wanted what Demon had with Gideon. It didn't matter that she couldn't decide why she wanted Gideon, for himself or because of Lucas. "I want someone to love me, is that too much to ask?" She cried into the quilt with all the anxiety and pain that tore at her heart.

[[No, it's not.]]

Angel's head snapped up in surprise at the deep voice. She looked around her room as she lifted herself up on her elbows and then into a sitting position in the middle of the bed, when she didn't see anyone in the room. The voice had sounded so familiar and her heart raced. Despite herself she found herself hoping against hope.

"Lucas?" Angel's voice was wavering with emotion and uncertainty. Logically her mind was telling her that it wasn't possible and that she'd just imagined a voice from her subconscious, answering her own question. Did she dare to hope that he was really able to speak to her, that somehow from inside the Box, he was able to reach out and communicate with her? Angel was afraid of the answer and what it might mean.

There was a long silence as Angel waited for an answer and she was beginning to believe with regret that she had just imagined it, when the voice spoke inside her head again.

[[There's someone who really loves you Angel-face... Me.]] Angel gasped with excitement as this time she recognized the familiar drawl beyond a doubt. She broke into a grin, her encounter with Galen as well as the pain of watching Gideon with Demon in the library forgotten. Lucas was all she could think about now.

She closed her eyes and thought. She knew instinctively that she didn't have to talk aloud for him to hear her; that somehow he was able to talk to her the way her sisters did. She had so many questions. How was he able to talk with her? Did it have something to do with her encounter with the Apocalypse Box over four months ago? Did something happen during that period in the cell she couldn't remember? Why was he only talking to her now? Why hadn't he spoken to her sooner? Wasn't he angry for her betrayal? So many questions but the only one she could ask in amazement was, *[[You love me?]]*.

There was a long silence, and Angel started to feel afraid that he'd gone and wouldn't answer her question. Afraid all over again that she was going crazy, that in her longing for him, her wishing that Gideon were Lucas, that she really was hearing things that weren't there. She almost started crying again, but then heard his reply. His voice was low and sexy.

[[Course I do, darlin'.]] Angel felt a giddy rush of joy and clasped her hands together against her lips. Lucas loved her; she wasn't the only one without someone who loved her after all. She started laughing and she jumped off the bed, twirling around and around her arms raised out on either side of her. She only stopped twirling when she started to feel dizzy then felt a distinct change, a sudden sense of being alone. She called to Lucas over and over again. But there was only silence.

Angel stood still in the middle of the floor. It must have just been her imagination, Wishful thinking. Nothing that good could happen to her. It was just her tortured mind trying to give herself something to hold onto. Just like the dream she'd had about Lucas, it wasn't real. She wanted Lucas so badly that her own mind was playing tricks on her. Making it even harder for her to move on, to not want Gideon because he reminded her of Lucas. Torturing her endlessly. She suddenly started to laugh; even to her own ears she could hear that it was hysterical laughter born from her pain and anguish. She collapsed in a heap on the floor and wondered how the hell she was going to get through the big dinner tonight. She started laughing even harder. Tonight would be the first time she would come face to face with Gideon. *[God, how am I going to manage to pull that off?]*

Angel remained on the floor for hours after the laughter had died down and her tears had dried up. Desperately trying to pull herself together, she got up and went through to her bathroom where she ran a hot bath, adding fragrant oils to the water that would help relax her. Then she undressed and lowered herself into the water and remained there for nearly an hour, topping the bath with hot water when it cooled.

While lying back letting the water and oils sooth her Angel forced herself to pull herself together. She made herself believe that she'd just imagined Lucas's voice. It didn't help to make her feel better, because that just meant that she was back to having no one to love her. But she forced those negative thoughts away. In about an hour she would have to go to dinner. She would have to come face to face with the others, but most especially with Gideon. And she knew that the only way she would get through the evening was if she forced herself to not think about Lucas.

She also made a silent vow that she would be on her best behavior for her sisters' sakes. She knew how happy they all were and the last thing they needed was her making trouble or getting into a fight with Gideon. She made the decision that she would go to dinner and try her best to get along. She knew it would mean a lot to Demon especially, if she managed it.

Angel closed her eyes and rested her head back against the back of the tub for a moment and then

willing herself, she climbed out, picking up her silk robe and putting it on. She hit the small stone knob on the side of the tub and watched as the water drained away. Then taking a deep breath she turned and headed back into her bedroom where she started getting herself dressed for dinner.

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

The Witches of Eriadne: Toil and Trouble

{[Part 1: Anticipation](#)} {[Part 2: Reunion](#)} {Part 3: Out and About} {Part 4: Life and Death} {Part 5:
Breaking Away}