

The Witches of Eriadne: Toil and Trouble - Part 4: Life and Death

by [The Space Witches](#)

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Lucas Buck

Chapter 1

Upon entering the dark cell, Angel lit two fire-torches and placed them so that there was enough light to see what she was doing. She placed the third one in the slot on the back of the door. Then she stood in the middle of the cell, nervously eyeing the Apocalypse Box, which Lucas, speaking for the first time since she'd left her rooms, had instructed her to place in the center of the floor. As she stood looking down, a quote from Macbeth popped into her head in many ways strangely suited to Lucas and what she was about to do. *"And that, distilled by magic sleight / Shall raise such artificial sprites As / by the strength of their illusion / Shall draw him on to his confusion."*

After a moment of just staring at the Box, Lucas spoke to her. *[[Now get the powder out, Angel-face, and draw a perfect pentagram around the Box.]]*

She slipped her carry-bag off her shoulder and took out the bottle. She also removed the piece of paper and stuck it into the waistband of her pants before she tossed the bag to one side. Then she took the cork out of the bottle, making sure to breathe through her mouth so that she couldn't smell the pungent ingredients. Going down on hands and knees, she began to draw the pentagram on the ground. She had to concentrate hard and take great care, as she knew it was vital that all points of the star were perfect and positioned correctly in relation to each other. She noticed that her hand was shaking slightly from nerves as she poured the pungent powder. She stopped and closed her eyes, calming herself down. When she opened her eyes and stretched out her hand to continue, it was rock

steady.

It took her twenty minutes to complete the star. When she was finished, she stood up and threw the bottle into a corner where it shattered as it hit the wall. She brushed the dirt from her hands and knees and looked at the pentagram. It was perfect. *[[I've finished Lucas,]]* she informed him softly.

[[About time. Now set the powder on fire and start saying the spell. Remember to repeat it three times.]]

Angel ignored the cold, impatient tone of his voice. She couldn't really hold it against him. He wanted out as much as she wanted him out. She walked over to one of the fire-torches and brought it back to the star on the ground. She stood by one of its points, careful not to stand on it and smudge the line. She lowered the flame to the powder, which ignited with a hiss, then she stepped back as the flames jumped up and quickly put the fire-torch back into its slot on the wall.

Angel took up a stance at one of the points of the star, then took out the piece of paper and unfolded it. She hesitated, again unsure how something this simple could work to bring Lucas back; she needed more reassurance. *[[Lucas, are you sure this is going to work?]]* There was a long silence and for an instant, she thought he wasn't going to speak to her. When he did, his voice was gentle, a tone she wasn't used to at all.

[[Trust me Angel-face. Now come on. Let's get the party going.]] Angel nodded. She took a deep breath, clearing her mind of everything else but the task at hand, then looked down at the spell and began to recite the words.

As she finished the words the first time, her eyes widened as the lid of the Apocalypse Box began to open, but she didn't hesitate as she repeated the words. A wind started to kick up in the cell, and the Box began to glow brighter. There was a growing humming sound that filled the room. The wind blew her hair around her face, but she was oblivious to it, as now in a trance-like state, she started on the words for the final time. The torches blew out as the wind intensified with every word she spoke; only the flames of the pentagram remained alight. The wind was howling now, and the humming sound deafening. The Apocalypse Box was glowing an intense white that filled the room, almost blinding Angel as she drew to a close.

Suddenly everything built to an almighty crescendo and Angel felt herself propelled backwards. She was slammed into the wall and screamed in pain as her head hit the wall hard and she fell to the floor. She lay too dazed to move, covering her head with her arms. She tried to open her eyes, but the instant she did so, she had to close them again, as the intense light burned her retinas. Then, suddenly it stopped. The cell was deathly quiet as the wind and humming stopped abruptly.

Angel moved only after she was sure it was safe. She struggled to a standing position, only vaguely aware that the torches had once again started to burn. Her head was throbbing and she felt something warm and wet on her forehead. Touching her fingers to it, she brought her hand down into view. Her fingers were slick with blood from a gash just below her hairline. She closed her eyes and fought the wave of dizziness that washed over her.

When she felt stable enough, she opened her eyes and looked over at the center of the cell. The Apocalypse Box was just sitting there. The lid was now closed and it was no longer glowing, not even its usual eerie green. Angel's eyes darted to the shadows in front of her as she heard a sound. Her heart almost jumped out of her body. Was it Lucas? She watched in anticipation as someone stepped out of the shadows

Angel stared in horror as Gideon moved into the light cast by the torches. She was too shocked to notice that he was dressed in the same black jeans, white shirt and tan jacket that Lucas had worn in her second dream. Her mind pitched and she glanced anxiously around the room, trying to see if the spell had worked and Lucas was there, too, but it was just the two of them. Dear God, somehow Gideon must have heard or seen her and followed her down here. She continued to stare in horror. She'd been caught! Her mind raced, trying to find something she could tell him to explain. Angel opened her mouth and struggled to speak, but couldn't get anything out. She was feeling dizzy by the minute, but she had to try and explain. She moved forward with a jerk and managed to find her voice.

"Matthew, I..." Angel faltered, unable to utter another word.

He moved closer and she looked at him, dumbstruck. Instead of looking at her with anger, he gave her a small sexy smile. "Not Matthew, Angel-face --Lucas Buck."

Angel heard the familiar drawl and gasped. His face began to swim in front of her eyes. The combination of the knock on the head and this were too much. She felt herself falling as the darkness washed over her and dragged her to the ground.

When Gideon emerged from the bedroom in the morning, dressed in his jeans but still toweling his hair dry, he found Deborah standing in front of the Comm. console, looking down at it with a puzzled expression on her face. He stood behind her, putting his arms around her, pulling her close to him, his hands resting on her bump, kissing her neck. She turned in his arms, putting her hands against his bare chest and smiled, kissing his lips softly. He could see that she still looked puzzled and raised an eyebrow. "What's the matter? You look worried."

Deborah shook her head as she put her arms around his neck, "Not worried. Surprised, I suppose." He waited for her to continue. "There was a message on here for me. From Nikarran, the Guard Captain. It was odd." She was frowning again and stopped.

Gideon encouraged her to go on, "In what way odd?"

He could see her hesitation, then watched as she made up her mind to tell him. "He gave me a message from Angel. He said he'd met her yesterday evening, and she'd asked him to tell me that she was spending the night in the village." Deborah smiled at him. "Of course, I should have picked up the message last night, but someone around here had me too busy to even think about checking."

Gideon smiled at her and tightened his grip around her waist, bringing her close enough for another kiss. "I don't remember you putting up much of a struggle, but what's so odd about the message?"

Deborah frowned again. "Angel doesn't normally bother letting me know what she's doing, and after yesterday afternoon I'm surprised..." she trailed off as his expression changed.

"What about yesterday afternoon? Did something happen that I don't know about?" He was frowning now.

"You were asleep, so I went to see Angel --" Gideon took a deep breath and was about to start speaking when Deborah interrupted. "No, Matthew, don't tell me. I know I shouldn't have gone, but I wanted to talk to her. She is my sister and I needed to know why she'd said that awful thing."

He let out the breath and spoke. "So what happened?"

She leaned her head against his neck and lowered her voice. Gideon couldn't see her face, but he could tell that the meeting had upset her. "She told some horrible lies about you. She said -- well, it doesn't matter what she said. It was all lies." Deborah felt him go rigid against her and lifted her head to look at him. "Please, Matthew, don't be angry. It doesn't matter. It was just stupid, but we didn't part on very good terms. So I'm surprised she bothered to send the message."

Gideon was frantically trying to get his reactions sorted out before she noticed anything wrong. He pulled her head back close to his neck so she couldn't see his face. Her comments had opened a floodgate of guilt, anger, apprehension, and shame. What had Angel told her? Had she told Deborah what had happened in the orchard? In the library? She must have, and Deborah hadn't believed her. He couldn't believe that he could be that lucky, and he immediately felt deep shame that she should trust him so completely when he'd betrayed her. Gideon desperately sought for something neutral to say. "Maybe later she was sorry for what she'd said, and the message was the nearest she could get to an apology."

He felt her nod and accept his explanation. His guilt increased another notch. "You're probably right." Deborah lifted her head and smiled at him. "Now, I'm starving. Let's go to breakfast." She reached up and finger-combed his damp hair. Gideon kissed her again, then released her so that he could pick up his t-shirt and pull it on.

"I need to catch up with Raven, John and Max about what progress they're making. You know, so far this working vacation has been all vacation and not much work."

Max, Ilas, and Dureena had returned late the previous night from their trip, and were eager to tell the others about what they'd found. Max was waxing lyrical about the inscriptions they'd discovered and his own skill at translating them, as Gideon and Demon entered the dining room. It was the first time Max and Gideon had met since the evening of the dinner party held there.

As Gideon stood behind Demon's chair, he spoke. "Max, I owe you an apology. That crack about Chaucer was uncalled for and I'm sure, untrue. I'm sorry." He then moved to sit next to Demon.

Max looked at him, raising an eyebrow in surprise. "Thank you, Captain. You're quite right; it was untrue. I occasionally read 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue,' too." There was general laughter around the table. Max went back to describing their findings, which were limited at this stage. Matheson, Raven, and Gideon all joined in an animated discussion about where else they could search. Ilas and Dureena joined in, but Lily took the opportunity to move around to sit at the other side of Demon to Gideon.

Lily spoke quietly to avoid the others hearing. "Have you seen Angel at all? I'm getting worried. I've tried to send to her, but she won't answer me." Demon could see the concern in the small girl's face. She described what had happened the previous afternoon and the message she had just picked up from the Guard Captain.

Lily frowned. "I wonder if someone in the village is seriously sick or injured. They must be if Angel had to stay overnight. Do you think we should ask Luke to go and see if he can help?"

Demon shook her head. "I'm sure if Angel needed help she would ask. She's always taken her duties in

the village very seriously. She's not very happy at the moment, particularly with me. I suspect that this is an excuse to get away from us all, especially from me, for a time." She smiled sorrowfully at Lily. "This isn't a very easy time for Angel. She can see that we're all happy and she isn't. In some ways it might be best if we leave her alone for a few days. Our visitors will be gone all too soon," Demon's face briefly showed the pain this thought gave her. "and gone with them will be the main cause for her unhappiness." She looked at Gideon as he leaned forward on the table, his food forgotten in front of him as he listened to Dureena describing how she and Max had got into a concealed chamber in the ruins.

Lily placed her hand over Demon's and squeezed. "It's not your fault, Demon. You can't help loving him and you can't stop him from loving you. Not that you'd want to." She grinned broadly, making Demon laugh.

"You're right about that, but Lily, what are we going to do when they go?" Lily could see Demon's eyes fill with tears.

"Don't think about it. Let's enjoy the time we have with them and worry about that when it happens." Lily squeezed Demon's hand again, then stood and moved back around the table to take her previous seat between her lovers.

The discussion about the inscriptions continued.

"Aw, hell!" Lucas cursed as he moved forward to catch Angel. He lowered her unconscious form to the ground, placed one arm around her shoulders, and let her rest against his shoulder. He looked at her still face. He'd expected her to be surprised by his likeness to Gideon, but he hadn't expected her to faint.

His eyes turned to the gash on her head. Lucas dug into the pocket of his jacket and brought out a handkerchief. He raised it to the cut and dabbed gently, pleased to see that it wasn't bleeding anymore and wasn't as bad as it looked. The last thing he needed was to have Angel seriously hurt. Cleaning off some of the drying blood, he put the handkerchief back in his pocket and turned his attention to her again. He had to bring her round; they couldn't hang out here for too long. There were things to be done.

Lucas caressed her face and called to her. "Come on, darlin'. Rise and shine." He frowned when there wasn't even a flicker of her eyes. He sighed heavily and let his eyes stray down her body. He raised an eyebrow in appreciation at the swell of her breast against the tight fabric of her sleeveless black leather top. The black leather pants Angel was wearing looked as if she'd been poured into them. Her small feet were clad in simple leather sandals. Lucas smiled; he had a lot of plans for this body. ['Course, I prefer my women conscious.]

Angel could hear a deep voice calling to her and felt herself coming up out of the darkness as she regained consciousness. She could feel a strong arm around her shoulders, and she felt something warm and soft against her cheek. She moved her head and moaned at the ache her movement caused. She took a deep breath and smiled as a spicy fragrance filled her nostrils. It was a familiar scent. Angel opened her eyes, blinking as she forced her eyes to come into focus, and she looked up into the face of the man holding her.

Lucas watched her closely as she opened her eyes and looked at him. Then he grunted in surprise as he felt himself being pushed away. He regained his balance before he fell to the ground and crouched

down on his haunches in front of her, letting her look him over before he said anything.

Angel watched him. She couldn't understand what was going on. He'd said he was Lucas, but that wasn't possible, he looked just like Gideon. He watched her silently. As she looked harder at him, she noticed that his hair was longer. Unlike Gideon's hair, it fell across his ears, and the back of his hair curled up. She realized that it made him look even sexier. His face was identical to Gideon's, same mouth, nose, and cheekbones; his eyes were the same hazel, yet there was a distinct difference to them. There was a coldness to them, not the warmth that Gideon sometimes had in his eyes. Angel looked over his body, and she gasped gently as she realized how he was dressed. He was wearing the same outfit that Lucas had in her dream. She raised wide eyes to his watchful ones. Had the spell really worked and this was indeed Lucas in front of her?

"I don't understand. How is it possible? You look just like Matthew," she stammered.

Lucas smiled. "Well, I wouldn't say just like Space-Cadet. I have a better hair-cut and better taste in clothes."

Angel shook her head in confusion and Lucas decided he'd better explain, because she looked like she was scared out of her wits. "Let me tell you a little about myself, darlin', then you'll know I'm who I say I am."

He stood, his legs parted slightly and his thumbs hooked into his front pockets. Lucas watched as Angel struggled to her feet, never taking her eyes from him as she watched him in silence. She stood there and listened as he assured her that the spell had worked and that he was back. Her mind reeled as Lucas told her why he looked like Gideon, or more correctly, why Gideon looked like him. It was almost unbelievable, except she did believe him; it was too logical not to be real. Lucas explained that Gideon was descended from him in a direct male line, which explained the family resemblance. Somehow the genetic lottery had replicated Lucas exactly in the tenth generation. He told her that it had been fate that Gideon got the Apocalypse Box; it explained why Space Cadet was the perfect host for him. The more he spoke, the more Angel could see that this was Lucas.

When he'd taken over Gideon's body, Gideon's voice and body language had changed. His expressions had been darker, his eyes held a different glint. Angel realized with a leap of her heart that this was Lucas, and it thrilled her more than anything that he didn't look different. She hadn't given much thought to what Lucas really looked like, but this was beyond her wildest dreams. She jumped slightly when he spoke.

"Are you gonna just stand there staring at me, Angel-face, or are you going to show me how happy you are to see me?" She didn't move as he approached her, then he cupped her face and tilted her head back as his mouth came down to claim hers. His tongue parted her lips and moved deep into her mouth.

At first Angel didn't respond, but then suddenly her arms were around his neck and she was kissing him back passionately. [I have Lucas back!] She broke the kiss and let her hands move over his face and his chest, her eyes wandering over him with delight. Then she pulled his head down and her lips meshed with his, her tongue gently licking over his lips before pushing its way into his mouth to seek out his tongue.

After a long moment, Lucas placed his hands on her arms and pushed her away. Her eyes were sparkling an intense blue and her face was flushed with excitement.

"Well, I'll take that as a 'yes'." Lucas pushed her away not so that he could talk, but because he'd felt his cock twitching in response to her touching him. If he hadn't pushed her away, he would have taken her right there in the cell. He wanted her, but that had to wait. There were some issues that needed tending to first.

Angel laughed, her hands resting on his chest as she looked at him. He was really there. She had Lucas back! What was she going to do now? The others -- she spoke of her fears.

"Lucas, my sisters and the others. How am I going to explain? They hate you. Oh God, I have to hide you, at least until Gideon and the other men leave. They'll hurt you if they see you, I --" Lucas was shaking her, trying to stop her rush of words.

"Angel, calm down, dammit!" She winced as his fingers dug painfully into her arms and froze at his harsh tone. She expected to see anger; instead, he was looking at her calmly with a small smile turning up the corners of his mouth.

"I have no intention of hiding. Lucas Buck can take care of himself. Besides, they can't hurt me," he said with his usual arrogance. Angel opened her mouth to say something, but he raised a finger to her lips, silencing her.

"Relax darlin'. I have everything under control." Angel bit her lip and tried to calm down. Lucas would take care of everything; she believed in him. She just didn't know what to do next.

"Lucas, what now?"

Lucas traced his finger across her lips. "Well, why don't we go meet the others, and get it out of the way?"

Angel's eyes widened. "Lucas, I'm not sure that's such a good idea. They'll be very angry and they might hurt you. I don't want to lose you just when I've got you back." Her voice was filled with worry. She didn't really care what the others thought about what she'd done, or if they were angry with her. She was afraid they would see Lucas and try to kill him again.

Lucas lowered his head and placed a brief kiss on her lips and caressed her cheek. "They're gonna have to know about me sooner or later. I'd rather it be sooner, and then with that out of the way, I can do what I really want to do--" Lucas bent down to whisper into her ear, telling Angel exactly what it was he wanted to do to her. He felt her shudder in excitement. He straightened enough so that he could kiss her again. She moaned and arched into him as his tongue slipped into her mouth. She felt drunk when he broke the kiss.

"C'mon, darlin', let's go find the others." Lucas took her left hand in his. He felt her hesitate and looked at her questioningly.

"Please, Lucas I'm not sure we should do this," her voice wavered.

"Angel-face, believe me, nothing bad is gonna happen. Hell, they're probably gonna be too stunned to move when they get a load of me, and I for one can't wait to see their reactions." His tone was low and dangerous. He was dying to see them. He had plans for all of them, a little payback for what they'd done to him. No one crossed Lucas Buck and got away with it.

"Now tell me, Angel-face, where will all our friends be?" he asked. He hoped to have them all together

when they first saw him.

Angel stood for a moment, thinking. She'd lost track of time and wasn't sure where they all would be. She concentrated, counting the hours from when she'd been in her workshop until now. She smiled when she realized that it was morning. "Breakfast! They'll all be together having breakfast." Angel said it with distaste. She hated the fact that they had taken to gathering together like that. It made her feel even more left out.

Lucas smirked. [Good, all the eggs in one basket.] He pulled Angel's hand up to hold it against his chest. "Perfect. Then I'll only have to make my grand entrance once. Much more impact that way. Well come on, Angel-face, lead the way."

Angel paused for a moment. She still wasn't sure it was a good idea, but she also remembered what Lucas was like if she didn't do what he wanted. She squared her shoulders and gave him a quick uncertain smile. She moved past him toward the door, still holding his hand tightly. She didn't care that she'd left her carry-bag and the Apocalypse Box on the floor. She picked up one of the fire-torches and looked back at Lucas, who arched his eyebrow and nodded his head forward, indicating that they leave.

Angel walked out of the cell with Lucas beside her. She didn't bother stopping to close the door. She was anxious and wanted to get this over as quickly as possible.

Lucas stood in the corridor outside the dining room, holding Angel's shoulders as she leaned her back against his chest. He could feel how fast her heart was beating from fear, anticipation, and excitement. They both listened to the conversation going on inside, something to do with some inscriptions in nearby ruins. Nothing worth knowing about. He was looking forward to the consternation that he knew his appearance would bring, as well as the opportunity to lay down some ground rules for the future. He'd given Angel careful instructions on what she was to do when she entered the dining room. Now she just had to carry out his instructions.

Lucas leaned forward and kissed Angel gently on the side of her neck. He could feel her pulse racing under his lips. "You know what to do, Angel-face, just do what I've told you and everything will be fine." He gently pushed her forward toward the door.

Demon was sitting back in her chair, listening to the conversation, when she caught sight of Angel in the doorway. She was surprised to see that Angel was still wearing the same clothes as when they'd last met, but assumed that she must have just returned from the village and hadn't had time to change. Angel took a couple of steps into the room and stopped, staring silently at the group around the table. One by one, the others noticed her arrival and the conversation gradually died down. When she had their full attention, Angel spoke, "I have a surprise for you. Someone who's just dying to meet you all."

Demon was watching Angel closely, but a flicker of movement dragged her attention away. There was a man standing in the doorway. He stood with legs apart and his thumbs hooked into the pockets of his black jeans. His white shirt was partially covered with a tan suede jacket. There was no doubting who he was. It was Gideon, but Gideon was sitting next to her. When she looked around at him, she could see him staring at the man in the doorway, with the same look of stunned amazement shared by

everyone around the table.

Demon looked back at the man. He was Gideon, but he wasn't. The features were identical, but this man looked a little younger and a little heavier. His hair was longer, long enough to cover his ears. But the main difference was the look of cool contempt with which he surveyed the room. She'd never seen that expression on Gideon's face.

The man spoke. "Well, surprise, surprise, surprise. Just thought I'd come along and introduce myself." His voice was lower than Gideon's, with a distinct drawl. The sound of it sent shivers down Demon's spine. She'd had nightmares about the man with that voice, and the things he'd done to her and her sisters. She froze in her chair as he continued. "The name's Lucas Buck, and that's Buck-- with a B." The words slashed through her, bringing back the memories of what had happened between them in her rooms.

She watched as he moved forward and placed his arm around Angel's waist, pulling her towards him. Angel leaned in against him, and looked up into his face, her total adoration clear in her expression. Demon felt sick. She could see that Angel had fallen completely under his influence and was obeying him again, as she had the last time. [But where has he come from? How is this possible?]

Demon became aware of movement around her. Gideon and Matheson had leapt up and were striding towards Lucas and Angel. They stopped dead in their tracks as Angel exerted her power. Demon watched as Raven, Max, and Dureena also froze in place. Only she, Lily, and Ilas were unaffected.

Demon rose from her chair and walked slowly towards the couple in the doorway. She felt Ilas following at her back, and heard Ilas's voice in her head. *[[Let me fight him, Demon. He hurt you and Lily, let me hurt him.]]*

Demon sent back a calming message. *[[Let's see what he wants first. If we hurt him, then we hurt Angel, and she's been hurt enough already. We don't want to make this worse.]]* She felt Ilas subside behind her but knew that the blue-haired girl was still alert and ready to fight.

She came to a stop a few paces short of where Lucas and Angel stood. "What do you want?" She had a million other questions, but this seemed the most important.

Lucas smiled at her and for a moment, Demon could see why her sister was so fascinated by him. When he smiled, his attraction was undeniable. The coldness in his hazel eyes was replaced momentarily by a warmth that was almost irresistible. He spoke softly to her, "Well, when I arrived, I just wanted to say hello, but now I see you have something to tell me." He moved his arm from Angel's waist and stepped forward, bringing his hand up to rest on Demon's belly. She tried to back away, but he quickly grasped her arm and held her. He pulled her close and whispered in her ear. "Don't fight me. I can stop his heart any time I want. Shall I do that, Whiplash?" Demon looked at him, knowing whom he meant and knowing that he wasn't bluffing.

She spoke equally quietly, "No, don't. I won't fight you, but if you hurt him or my baby, I'll kill you. Believe that."

Lucas smiled at her again. "Oh, I'm not going to do a thing to hurt the baby, darlin'. Why should I, when it's mine?" He stroked her belly and closed his eyes. Demon could feel his concentration, and then he opened them and smiled again. "Well, this one could go either way, but he certainly has potential."

Demon dragged her arm away from his grasp and stepped back. "He's nothing to do with you. You

are *not* his father." His smile became a sneer.

"Beg to differ. And what have we here? You running a maternity ward around here?" Lucas moved toward where Lily was standing, arms wrapped around her stomach protectively, an expression of pure horror on her face as she stared at him. Ilas moved to block him and he looked down at her. "Do you want poor old Max to have a heart attack darlin'? It can be arranged." Ilas froze as he moved past her and he grabbed Lily's arm. He pulled her close and again placed his hand on her swollen abdomen. "Do we have a spare to go with the heir?" Lucas closed his eyes and concentrated again. When he opened them, his disappointment was evident. "Looks like you were knocked up before I got to you, Lily-Love."

He dropped her arm, grinning as she immediately pulled back and held her belly again, then he sauntered back to where Angel stood, watching and waiting. His arm went around her waist again, and she leaned her head against his shoulder. Demon could see the beads of sweat standing out on Angel's forehead as she continued to hold the Excalibur crew immobile. It had always been easier for Angel to hold something still than to move it, but the strain was beginning to show.

Lucas bent his head and gently kissed Angel's forehead. "Keep it up, darlin', you're doin' a great job." He turned back to Demon. "You asked what I want? Well, the answer is not much, from you people. Angel and I have a lot of catching up to do, and we just want to be left alone for a while." He smiled down at Angel again. She was gazing up at him, her eyes and cheeks glowing with pleasure at his praise. "Just one question for you, Whiplash. There's someone missing. Where's the Magic Man?"

Demon frowned for a moment before realizing that he meant Galen. "He left for a few days. He should be back any time now. Why do you ask?" Lucas smiled and ignored her question. He turned to the others, still frozen by Angel's powers.

"I know you're pissed at me for what I did to him," gesturing to Matheson with his free hand. "Forget it. Move on. You're not going to be able to do a damned thing about it, so let it go. Leave us alone and we'll leave you alone." He turned, pulling Angel with him.

Before they left, Demon called out, "Angel, wait!" Angel paused in the doorway and turned back to face Demon. Lucas moved his arm from her waist and leaned against the doorframe, his arms crossed in front of him, watching the sisters.

Demon spoke again. "What have you done, Angel? And why?"

Angel face was strained with effort now. She was struggling to keep the five people still. They were fighting her power every instant and they were winning. The effort made her voice harsh as she replied.

"I brought him back, Demon. I love him, so I got him out of that horrible place where you put him. Why should I be the only one without someone to love? You should be happy; I won't be fighting you for Gideon any more. Now I have the man I really love and he loves me. Why can't you just be happy for me? But you can't, can you? You hate to see me happy. You just want to see me miserable and lonely, but I won't be like that ever again, Demon. I have Lucas now and that's all that matters."

Angel turned back to the doorway where Lucas straightened up and opened his arms for her to flow against him. He kissed her gently on the mouth then pulled her head to his chest. He looked at Demon over the top of Angel's head and his mouth twisted into a cynical smile. Demon realized that he didn't really care about her sister. She was just a tool for him to use and discard when he was done with her,

but she knew that Angel would never believe that. There was nothing she could do to save her sister from being terribly hurt by this man.

Lucas and Angel left the dining room. As they walked away, the hold Angel's mind had over the others gradually diminished and they found they could move again. Gideon and Matheson started towards the door when Demon's voice stopped them.

"Wait. Don't go after them yet. Angel will just hold you off again. Let's talk about this."

The men turned and watched as Demon walked over to where Lily stood. Raven and Demon reached Lily at the same moment and both put their arms around the tiny girl, who was shaking with reaction to Lucas's touch. Matheson followed quickly and Demon handed her sister to him, for him and Raven to soothe and comfort her. Demon had locked herself under control to prevent a similar reaction. She knew she would pay the price for the control she exerted now, but she'd deal with that later.

Gideon strode over to her and wrapped his arms around her. "Are you all right?" She could see his concern and hear it in his voice. It nearly cracked her façade, but she couldn't afford to let go of her control.

"Not really, but we have more important things to consider. What do we do now?"

Matheson was trying to persuade Lily to go back to their rooms but she refused to go, saying that she felt safer with the others. She wanted to say more but her voice failed. Max and Ilas were holding Dureena back as she tried to break free to go after Lucas. She hadn't forgiven him for the harm he'd done Matheson before, and she wanted revenge.

Gideon watched them while holding Deborah tightly. He called them to order. "OK people, let's calm down and discuss this rationally. Everyone sit and we can talk." He helped Deborah to a chair and sat next to her, holding her hand tightly. He was concerned to see that she'd locked herself under control and her impassive mask was fully in place. She wasn't allowing herself to react, and he wondered how long she could keep it up.

The others gathered and sat around the table, with Max almost dragging Dureena into her seat. Gideon looked around the table and asked, "So, will someone tell me who the hell that was, and why he looks like me?"

There was a long pause from around the table, only broken when Deborah said softly, "It's probably best if I answer that. I think I spent more time with him than anyone, but Angel, Galen, and I had some discussions later, which I should tell you about." She took a deep breath and summarized the events of Lucas's previous appearance. She recounted how Angel had accidentally released Lucas from the Apocalypse Box, his take over of Gideon's body, banishing Gideon to the oblivion of the Box, and their success in rescuing him from that oblivion and putting Lucas back where he belonged.

When she'd finished, Gideon spoke again. "So this 'evil spirit' was put into that damn Box, but he escaped and swapped places with my 'spirit', then got put back into the Box. OK, that much I've been told, although frankly, if I didn't remember the oblivion bit, I'd have a hard time believing it. But that was no spirit that just walked in. I don't believe in ghosts and he looked damned solid to me. So where did the body come from, and as I said earlier, why does he look like me?"

Deborah answered slowly. "I don't know where the body came from, but I think I can explain why he looks like you, Matthew. Galen and I spoke after we brought you back. He explained the origins and use of the Apocalypse Boxes and told me that this particular Box had been used to imprison a man who'd lived in the late 20th and early 21st century. He was very powerful in his time and was only banished when his son rebelled against him and collaborated in his capture. Galen thought it was likely that you were a direct descendant of that son and by chance, had an almost identical genetic structure to Lucas. This made you an ideal host for him, but I don't understand how he could come back in his own body, assuming that it *is* his own body that he's now walking around in."

There was a brief silence round the table before Lily spoke in a shaky voice. "I think I know how it was done, but I can't believe that Angel would do it. She couldn't have known what she was doing, or the price--" she trailed off, obviously distressed.

Raven stood and lifted her out of her chair. Holding her closely against him he said, "I'm taking her back to our rooms. This isn't good for her or the babies."

Lily struggled and protested. "No! It's crucial that I tell you what I know."

Raven looked at her, obviously concerned, as he held her tight, then sat down again. "For the moment, I'll go along with this, but if you get too distressed, then I'm taking you out of here." He kept her in his arms and she leaned back against his chest, comforted by his presence. Matheson leaned over and took her hand, squeezing it for encouragement.

Gideon spoke gently to her. "Tell us what you know Lily, and how you found out."

Lily took a deep breath and launched into her story. She told them about her researches after Lucas had been banished. She'd gone to the library to find the book that Angel had used to summon Lucas. She eventually found the spell and realised that it was both old and incredibly powerful. It was perhaps even older than the Vorlon who'd created this place. To make it work, Angel must have drawn on powers and forces that she hadn't even been aware existed. Lily had carried on reading past the spell that Angel had used, and realized that there was more to the process. She found that it was possible, under some very closely defined circumstances, to bring a person's body back from the moment before death, into the current time and space, but there was a price to pay. She paused, her eyes full of pain, then carried on.

"When someone has died, the only way they can be brought back physically is for someone else to give their life-force to them. From my reading, it seems that the ancients who developed this process were able to pass on a part of their life force to another, and could bring them back that way --" Before she could continue, Gideon leaped to his feet and started pacing.

"Sheridan! That's what happened to him. He died out on the rim, but some ancient being brought him back, giving up part of his life-force in the process." He spun around to look at Lily. "Could this be the same process?"

Lily shrugged. "I don't know. The problem is, that these days no one has enough of this life-force to give part of it away without it killing them. The book was very clear about this. The only way it will work is if a life is given for a life. Someone must die before the dead person can successfully be reborn," her voice began to waver and Raven held her more tightly, trying to give her the support she needed to carry on. Her next words were barely above a whisper, "and the book was also very clear that the most powerful life-force available for such an exchange is that of an -- an unborn child." Trembling, she

wrapped her arms around her stomach, as if trying to protect her babies, knowing that it might already be too late.

Matheson and Raven stared at each other, wide-eyed, remembering what Lily had said the night before they had confirmed the parenthood of their babies.

Gideon froze in his tracks and stared in horror at Lily, then turned his gaze to Deborah. He saw that she'd turned white, all color draining from her face, and she, too, had wrapped her arms around her stomach. He rushed to her, kneeling on the floor beside her chair, pulling her tightly to him. He looked across the table to see that John and Raven were both focused on Lily's distress. Max was trying to restrain Dureena again, while at the same time coping with Ilas, who appeared to be in shock. "John, help Max, will you?" Gideon watched as Matheson reluctantly left Raven and Lily and went to take Dureena from Max, holding her back, calming her down, leaving Max to comfort Ilas.

Gideon held Deborah tightly, while a sense of guilt swept over him. This was exactly what Galen had warned him about, that Angel's desperation and loneliness would drive her to extremes in her attempt to bring Lucas back. Also because he hadn't been able to follow Galen's advice and steer clear of Angel, he'd brought this evil down on them all. He tried to tell himself that this would have happened anyway, that Angel's obsession with Lucas would have driven her to this in the end. He didn't really believe that though. Last time, Matheson had almost paid for Gideon's mistake with his life. This time, an innocent child's life was the price, and it could easily be his own child who paid.

He became aware that Deborah was pushing at his shoulders, trying to release herself from his tight hold. He relaxed his arms a little and looked at her carefully. She stared back at him, her eyes enormous in her dead white face, her voice cracking slightly when she spoke. "Angel wouldn't do that, Matthew. I know you think her capable of anything, but not that. She wouldn't take a child's life to bring her lover back. She wouldn't -- she couldn't." Her head fell on his shoulder and she started to sob, all her emotional control wrenched away from her at the thought of what her sister might have done.

Gideon pulled her back tightly against him, and then looked over to Raven, who was rocking Lily gently in his arms. "Doctor, we need to get them checked over. That's the only way we'll know for sure if Lily is right about this."

Raven nodded. "We need to get them all to the infirmary. Then we'll know."

Gideon sat with Deborah in the infirmary, watching his crew and the women, trying to judge who was coping with the situation and who wasn't. Raven was torn between trying to prepare the equipment he needed to carry out the tests and staying with Lily, who was in deep distress. Matheson was hanging onto Dureena; she was desperately trying to get away from him, screaming about her plans to kill Lucas, slowly, and she was going into detailed descriptions of exactly how she planned to do it. Every man in the room flinched as she moved on to what she had planned for his genitalia. Matheson was trying to calm her, but obviously wanted to go to Lily and comfort her. Max was holding Ilas tightly, reassuring her that everything would be fine, that there was nothing to worry about. [I wish I shared his confidence.]

Since her momentary loss of control in the dining room, Deborah had pulled herself back together and was sitting silently, gripping his hand tightly. She leaned against him and spoke softly. "We should help. Can you handle Dureena? She might listen to you. I'll help Luke with Lily."

He looked at her and kissed her gently. "If you can cope, I think that would be a good idea. Are you sure you don't need me?"

Deborah smiled back at him. "I always need you, but right now, so do your crew. Go help them, Captain." Gideon hugged her tightly and helped her to her feet. Reluctantly letting go of her hand, he moved over to where Matheson still struggled with Dureena. He saw the relief in Matheson's eyes as he made his way over to them. Gideon took hold of Dureena's arms and held them tightly, nodding at Matheson over her head. "It's OK, John, I've got her. Go to Lily."

Matheson fled across the room to where Deborah had already taken Lily into her arms, freeing Raven to start working with his equipment.

Gideon looked down at Dureena, who was still writhing in his grasp, screaming threats at the top of her voice. "Stop it, Dureena." He used the full weight of command in his tone, something he rarely did with his crew. "You're making this more difficult for everybody. Just calm down. If you or your baby has been hurt, then I'll go after whoever is responsible. I don't know how, but I will and I'll make sure they pay. That's a promise." He looked her straight in the eyes to emphasize his point. "You know you can trust me, Dureena. I may be eccentric, but I won't screw around with your trust. Will you believe that?" As he spoke, Dureena gradually calmed, and stopped trying to break his grip. He watched as her face changed. The rage and fury were slowly replaced by fear. Gideon knew that she'd been using her anger to prevent herself from feeling the panic that threatened to overwhelm her.

He pulled her close to his chest and hugged her hard. He couldn't give her empty reassurances; all he could do was try to provide some sense of security and stability for her. As Gideon held Dureena, he watched over her head as Deborah left John and Lily to comfort each other and went to offer her help to Raven. [Where does she get the strength? And what am I going to do if our baby is dead?]

Raven turned quickly as he heard Demon approach. He'd just about finished the preparations he needed; it wasn't a difficult job. [Hell, I could do it using an old-fashioned stethoscope.]

He smiled at her as she spoke. "Is there anything I can do to help?" He could see that she had herself under rigid control, and he was grateful. If she hadn't been able to let Gideon take care of Dureena, John wouldn't have been available to comfort Lily, and Lily was in desperate need of comfort. She'd been uncharacteristically quiet since they'd left the dining room.

Raven spoke gently. "No, but now that you're here, let's do it." He held up the scanner that he intended to use. "I'm sure you're familiar with this. It can detect fetal life signs easily. It won't take a minute to check." He became aware that the room had gone silent.

Demon drew herself up, throwing her shoulders back as if preparing for a confrontation. "Go ahead." Raven could feel Gideon's eyes boring into his back as he passed the scanner over Demon's belly. A light flared brightly on the scanner and a sudden memory hit him. When they'd been in the Excalibur Medbay and he'd been checking Gideon after they freed him from the Apocalypse Box, he'd accidentally passed the scanner over Demon and that light had flickered. He realised that it had detected the first signs of her pregnancy. Raven knew that he now had evidence that Demon was already pregnant before she and Gideon returned to the planet together, exactly the opposite of what they wanted. But that piece of bad news could wait. For now, the news was good.

"Your both fine, Demon. Your baby is fine."

Raven watched as Demon closed her eyes and took a deep breath. "Thank you." She moved to where Gideon and Dureena were standing, both watching her closely. She put an arm around each of them, but lowered her head to Gideon's shoulder so he could kiss it without releasing his hold on Dureena.

Raven moved quickly to John and Lily. John was sitting on one of the infirmiry beds, holding Lily tightly in his lap and rocking her gently. As Raven went to them, John moved his arms from around her, holding her arms instead. Raven passed the scanner over her belly, [please, God, let them be OK,] and nearly collapsed in delight as the light flared again. He reset the scanner to pick up the other child and again, the scanner lit up. His throat was so tight he could hardly get the words out. "They're OK, they're both OK." He wanted to drop the scanner and wrap his arms around Lily as she started to cry.

Instead, she jumped up and hugged Raven fiercely, then quickly drew back and said in a tight voice, "Go. The others need you now," and sank back onto John's lap, turning her head into his shoulder.

John smiled at him over her head and spoke softly. "Go on. I'll take care of her."

Raven turned reluctantly and walked to where Gideon stood, holding Dureena. Demon stepped back to allow him more room and Gideon slowly turned Dureena around to face Raven, never letting go of her. Raven passed the scanner over Dureena's swollen belly. She was much larger than the other women, being closer to term, due to her species' shorter gestation period. He waited for the scanner to light. Nothing. He reset the scanner and tried again, desperately hoping that perhaps Dureena's physical differences were confusing the instruments, but all he was checking for was a fetal heartbeat. Even the Zanderi had heartbeats. Still nothing. He looked up at Gideon, who was watching him closely over Dureena's head. Raven shook his head. "I can't find--" he didn't know how to finish the sentence.

Dureena stood, completely rigid in Gideon's arms. She was looking intently at him, but the meaning of what he'd said didn't seem to have hit her. Raven watched as Gideon pulled the little Zanderi's back closer to him, wrapping his arms around her tightly. Raven stepped back and scanned one last time, but there was nothing there at all no heartbeat, no life signs of any kind. The baby was dead. He looked at Gideon again, then down to Dureena. "I'm so sorry, Dureena. There's nothing -- " He stopped and flinched as Dureena let out a scream of pain and loss that speared his skull. He watched as Demon rushed to help Gideon restrain her as she thrashed wildly. The couple held her between them, trying to calm and comfort her, knowing there could be no comfort for the loss that she'd suffered.

Raven stepped back and turned to fetch a tranquilizer. It wouldn't stop Dureena's pain, but it might numb it a little. As he applied it to her arm, he saw that Max and Ilas were both sitting in shocked silence. Then he remembered who the other parents of Dureena's child were. The loss to them was nearly as great as to Dureena. Leaving Gideon and Demon to look after her, he rushed over to Max and Ilas. The first thing he did was to pass the scanner over Ilas and confirmed that her baby was safe. Raven could see the immediate relief this brought, which freed Max and Ilas to go to Dureena.

Gideon and Demon stepped back and released her to the care of Max and Ilas. The tranquilizer was taking hold and gradually Dureena's screams of loss were diminishing. Raven watched as she slumped against Ilas. Max lifted her into his arms and carried her to one of the infirmiry beds, where he placed her gently. He sat on one side of the bed holding Dureena's hand tightly, while Ilas sat the other side and stroked Dureena's face. The sense of loss emanating from the trio could be felt by them all.

Gideon had taken Demon back into his arms and was holding her, her head pressed to his neck, as she wept quietly. Raven could see the grim expression on Gideon's face as he watched the three mourners across the room.

He looked at Raven and spoke. "I'm taking Deborah back to her rooms. I'd like to see you and John in the dining room in two hours. Will that give you enough time to do what you have to?" Raven nodded and watched as Gideon left with Demon.

Raven then went over to John and Lily. "I think you should do the same. Take Lily back to her rooms and I'll join you as soon as I can." John nodded and stood, still holding Lily, and carried her out of the infirmary.

Raven went over to Max, Ilas, and Dureena, trying to think of a gentle way of explaining what had to be done next.

Gideon stopped outside the door to the infirmary and turned to Deborah. She'd stopped crying and had pulled herself back under control. He looked at her closely. "I really want to take you back to your rooms and stay with you, but there are things I need to do. I could do with your help if you're able. If you can't, tell me and I'll understand."

Deborah nodded as she looked at him. "I'll do whatever I can and I'll put the hysterics off until later." She managed a weak smile that nearly broke his heart.

He kissed her gently then pulled back. "You're one amazing lady."

She continued, "What do you need, Matthew? What can I do to help?"

Gideon took a deep breath and ran through a quick list of what he needed. Floor plans of the castle, showing all possible access routes into Angel's quarters, details of what weaponry they held in the armory and what manpower they had available. Deborah nodded. "We need to go to the Guard Captain's office. He should have all those details on hand."

Gideon took her hand and they started walking through the corridors. After a while, Deborah spoke again. "I heard what you promised Dureena. I assume you plan to go after Lucas." Gideon nodded. Deborah pulled his arm, stopping him mid-stride, and spoke. "Two things, Matthew. First, you need to take Angel's powers into account in any plans you make. Second, while Angel is with him, he has a potential hostage. Can you be sure he won't hurt her?"

Gideon looked at her carefully before he replied. "Deborah, this isn't going to be easy to hear, but Angel is an accessory to what Lucas has done. She'll have to face the consequences of her actions--" he raised his hand and laid his fingers on her lips as she started to interrupt, "I know, you said that she couldn't have known what she was doing. Ignorance is no excuse, Deborah. A child is dead because of what she did. Knowingly or unknowingly, the child is still dead, and it could have been ours." He saw Deborah flinch at his last words and pulled her close to him, kissing her forehead lightly. Gideon relaxed his hold a little and continued. "I'm going to have to deal with my own contribution to this mess, and how much of what I've done and said to Angel has driven her to this, but it doesn't change the facts. I'll do whatever I can to make sure Angel isn't hurt, but taking Lucas down has to be my priority. They'll both have to pay for what they've done. I'm really sorry, Deborah, and I'll understand if you decide you can't help me to arrest and charge your sister, but I have to do this."

Gideon wondered what he would do if Deborah decided against him. What if she hated him for what he was planning? Could he live with losing her? But he knew he couldn't live with himself if he failed

to deliver on the promise he'd made to Dureena. He watched her as she thought through what he'd said, her eyes closed while she considered.

Deborah opened her eyes and looked straight at him, then said, "Promise me that you'll do whatever you can to make sure that Angel isn't hurt, and that you'll give her the chance to explain."

He nodded, but knew that wouldn't be enough. "I promise." Another commitment that he'd no idea how to deliver.

"Then I'll do whatever I can to help you take Lucas, quickly and safely. But Matthew, that's going to be very difficult. He and Angel are very powerful."

Gideon nodded and pulled her close again, kissing her gently. "Thank you." He released her and they started walking to the Guard Captain's office. For the next two hours, they went over all the information Gideon had requested, then he left to meet up with Raven and Matheson in the dining room.

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The Witches of Eriadne: Toil and Trouble

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