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

by The Space Witches

Galen

Chapter 3

Gideon opened the door to Deborah's rooms and immediately heard the sound of the shower from the bathroom. [Now why is she taking a shower at this time of day?] He saw the dress on the floor and bent to pick it up, feeling even more puzzled. Deborah was one of the tidiest people he'd ever known; she never dropped her clothes on the floor. The noise of the shower stopped and a few seconds later the door from the bathroom opened. Deborah emerged, with her hair wrapped in a towel and another towel wrapped around her. She stopped dead when she saw him and for a moment, Gideon thought she looked frightened of him. Then her face cleared and she threw herself at him, almost knocking him over in her haste.

He put his arms around her and hugged her closely. "What's going on? What's the matter?" Gideon could feel Deborah trembling as he held her, her arms covered in goose bumps and her head buried in his neck. He pulled his arms from around her waist and started to rub her upper arms. "You're freezing! Let's get you covered up." Steering her into the bedroom, he sat her at the foot of the bed before taking a robe and pulling it around her. Sitting next to her on the bed, Gideon put his arm around her and pulled her close, feeling her shiver. "What happened? Is this delayed shock from this morning? Should I get Raven?" Deborah shook her head.

Gradually the shivering abated, and when Gideon touched her cheek, he could feel that it was warmer. Color seeped back into her face as her temperature rose, and her teeth stopped chattering. Little by little,

he felt Deborah relax against him, as he rubbed her arms and back gently. He heard her take a deep breath and let it out in a sigh. Gideon put his hand to her chin and lifted her head, forcing her to look at him. "Tell me. What happened?"

He watched as Deborah looked him in the eyes and decided to tell him. "Lucas." She just said the name and nothing more.

Gideon felt his anger rising. "Lucas? What's he done now? Deborah, what's he done to you?" He could hear the anger in his voice and tried to control it. [If he's hurt her, I'll kill him now and be damned with Galen]

Deborah shook her head. "Nothing... nothing that matters. He felt you returning before he could... do what he wanted to do. He left."

Gideon surged to his feet. "He was here? In our rooms?" Deborah nodded. "What did he want? Oh God, it's fucking obvious what he wanted. Did he hurt you?"

She shook her head again. "No, he didn't get chance, but I don't think that's why Lucas was here. I think it was just bad luck that I came back while he was still here. I think he was doing something with the comm. equipment. There were lights on it when I came in."

Gideon went rushing through to the living room. He checked over the equipment carefully before returning to the bedroom and Deborah. Sitting back down on the bed, he took her hand. "He's sent at least five messages, maybe more. He's erased the logs so that I can't tell what he sent or where he sent them. How the hell does he know how to use that equipment?"

Deborah lifted her free hand to his face and touched his cheek. "He was in your head for a long while, Matthew. From the time you acquired the Box until four months ago, he was watching everything you did or said. Everything you know, now he knows."

Gideon nodded and said, "Which means that he can probably anticipate any move I'm likely to make against him. Well, Galen told me to wait until he gets here, and I guess he was right. There's not a lot I can do without him. So that gives me just over an hour until Galen arrives. Have you eaten? Shall I order us some food?"

Deborah shook her head. "Let's wait until Galen gets here. We can eat while we plan. For the moment... Matthew, please hold me."

Galen strode through the castle, his coat trailing behind him like a black train. All his unease and discomfort with this place had returned, and now he had good reason for his feelings. His worst fears had been realized, and Angel had brought Lucas back. The Technomage knew the price that was due for doing that, but tried hard to believe that Angel couldn't have known what she was doing. He pushed thoughts of Dureena and what she must be suffering out of his head; he'd deal with that later. He knew that she would want revenge and she'd look to him to help her. Galen had every intention of making sure she got what she wanted.

He flung both doors of the dining room open to see Gideon and Demon seated at the table waiting for him. The plans of the castle were once more spread across the table, along with plates of food. Galen heard movement behind him and spun around to find Matheson entering the room.

Gideon stood and spoke. "Galen, thanks for coming. John, is Raven going to join us?"

Matheson shook his head. "Max called. Dureena started to come out of the sedation. Luke and Lily are with her, along with Max and Ilas. They're going to need to induce labor soon now."

Galen watched as Gideon put his arm around Demon, hugging her as she took in a sharp breath at Matheson's news. Galen spoke. "The best thing we can do for Dureena now is to get the bastard who did this to her. Let's see what you have there, Matthew."

For the next hour they ate while they went over the floor plans, the weapons, and the manpower available to them and potential tactics for dealing with the combined powers of Lucas and Angel. At the end of that time, they were little further forward.

Gideon summarized the situation. "He's holed up in a strong defensible position with superior 'firepower' to anything we can bring against him. We can't do much against that, unless you have something up your sleeve, Galen?" He turned to look at the Technomage.

Galen smiled. "Funny you should phrase it like that, Matthew. I have indeed got a number of things up my sleeves, but none that I'm willing to show you at the moment. In these circumstances, particularly as he has a potential hostage, I think the best thing to do is to find out what he wants. He can't want to stay where he is indefinitely. I'm going to talk to him. I'll find out what he wants and see if we can get him moving, then we'll have more options." He stood and started toward the door, but Gideon blocked him.

"That could be very dangerous, Galen. I can't let you go in there alone. I'm coming with you"

Galen shook his head. "That won't work, Matthew. He's more likely to feel threatened and react badly if there are two of us. Also, I want to check to see if Angel is all right. He won't allow that if we're both there, but he might let me see her if I go alone."

Gideon nodded and stepped aside. "Be careful, Galen."

Galen laughed out loud. "Oh, I think I can take care of myself, Matthew, even against Lucas Buck."

He strode out through the dining room doors, not hearing Matheson's murmured comment. "Perhaps, but can you take care of yourself against Angel?"

Galen swept through the corridors, coat buttoned tightly, hood up, and staff in hand. He clamped down on the anger raging through him, as he thought about what had been done to Dureena and what was probably happening to Angel. He'd spent the last few days trying to put Angel out of his mind and failing miserably. Whatever she thought of him, he couldn't help but care for her and be concerned about her. Now she was back with the man who had abused her so badly before. Would Lucas treat her as badly this time? Would Galen find her in the same state as before? Naked and bruised, with bite marks and torn skin where Lucas had tied her hand and foot? Thinking of how she'd looked when he first saw her in Gideon's quarters made Galen's breath quicken; he quelled his arousal angrily. [No time for that!]

Galen wanted to know what Lucas was up to, and what he planned, now that he was present in his

own body. His biggest fear was that Lucas planned to stay right where he was. Galen knew that his friends from the Excalibur could not leave their women unprotected, pregnant, and vulnerable if Lucas was still around. They would have to either kill him or take him with them. Either option could lead to his friends being hurt or killed. He needed to find an alternative solution. Either he had to kill Lucas himself, or he had to capture him in a way that didn't involve his friends. With Angel fighting for Lucas, that wouldn't be easy, even with the powers that Galen had available. Also he would do nothing that could hurt Angel.

He approached Angel's room with no real plan of action in mind, but with a willingness to do whatever was necessary to protect his friends, including Angel.

Lucas sat on the sofa in Angel's living room, his impatience growing. He'd expected Galen and the others to arrive within an hour or so of his return from Demon's rooms, but had now been waiting well over two hours, his senses alert for any approach. When he felt Galen's progress towards him and realized he was alone, Lucas smiled with satisfaction. He'd had a plan for how he could get Galen alone, but now it wouldn't be necessary.

He picked up the large book he had ready and laid it across his knees. Time to see if his plan would work. Lucas always enjoyed this stage in the game. Could he manipulate Galen to do what he wanted? How much would he have to adapt his plan as he went along? How much would he have to give to get what he wanted? He knew what he was prepared to sacrifice, but he'd much rather walk away with the whole game.

He watched as the door opened slowly.

Galen pushed the door open quietly and saw Lucas sitting on the sofa opposite, staring straight at him, a smile playing on his lips. Although the others had warned Galen of how alike Gideon and Lucas were, it still came as a shock. Galen realized that it would be hard to remember that this man wasn't his friend Matthew, but an adversary.

Galen took a couple of paces into the room and stopped. He waited for Lucas to break the silence.

"Took your time, didn't you, Galen?" The low drawl sounded warning bells in Galen's mind. This man appeared totally confident and in control. He started to move his staff, ready to attack, but paused as the book lying on Lucas's knee fell to one side, revealing a small crossbow aimed straight at Galen's heart.

"Now you didn't think I'd be unprepared, did you?" Lucas shook his head in mock astonishment. "Well, I'm disappointed in you, Technomage. I didn't expect you to underestimate me." The crossbow was held rock steady and Galen could see that Lucas's finger was resting on the trigger. He knew he couldn't attack Lucas fast enough to prevent the bolt being launched, and he had no doubt that the aim would be perfect.

Galen spoke for the first time. "I won't repeat that mistake. What do you want, Buck?" He almost spat out the name. "And where is Angel?"

Lucas's smile broadened. "Oh yeah, you have a bit of a thing for that girl don't you, Magic Man?

Well, I'll let you see her on one condition." He paused to watch Galen's reaction. Galen nodded and Lucas continued. "Are you a man of your word, Galen? If we agree on a truce, will you keep your word?" Galen nodded again. "Then give me your word that as long as we remain in these rooms, you'll do nothing to attack or harm me or Angel, and you can see her."

Galen spoke quietly. "You have my word." He wondered if Lucas would believe him. Apparently so. He watched as Lucas unwound the spring, removed the bolt from the stock, and put the crossbow down onto the sofa beside him.

"Don't want any accidents do we, Galen? Angel shouldn't leave such dangerous toys lyin' around." He stood and nodded towards the bedroom door. "Go look for yourself. But keep quiet; she's asleep."

Galen moved quickly to the bedroom, aware that Lucas was following him closely. He opened the door quietly and looked in. His nostrils flared; the room reeked of sex. It was blatantly obvious what Lucas and Angel had been doing since Lucas' return. He looked at the bed and saw Angel lying on her back, sprawled across it. She was deeply asleep, breathing heavy and slow. The sheet had fallen to the floor, exposing her body to his view. He took a deep breath at the sight of her beauty. Her hair was spread across the pillow, and her face was fixed in a half smile. Galen had never seen her look so happy as she did now. His eyes moved down her body to the perfect breasts, flat stomach and black triangle of hair. Her legs were slightly parted in silent invitation. Everything about her just begged to be touched, fondled, and caressed. This time, he could see no marks on her body.

Galen was aware that Lucas was watching him and fought to control his reaction to the sight of Angel lying naked in her bed. Lucas whispered in his ear, "She's as energetic when she's asleep as she is awake." Galen whipped his head round to see Lucas smirking at him. He watched as Lucas moved into the room, picking up the sheet from where it had fallen to the floor and covering her with it. He turned back to Galen and gestured for him to leave.

Galen turned and walked back into the living room. Lucas followed and closed the bedroom door quietly behind him. He moved back to the sofa and sat, apparently totally at ease. Galen was aware how easy it would be to attack him at this point, but his word meant something to him. Lucas had kept his side of the bargain, and so would he. He moved back to his position in front of the outer door and pushed his hood back onto his shoulders.

Lucas looked up at him, smiled and said, "Well, we're off to a good start, Galen. Maybe we can trust each other enough to deal. Do you want to deal?" Lucas leaned forward and narrowed his eyes as he looked at Galen.

Galen considered. "That depends. What do you want and what are you offering?"

Lucas sat back in his seat again and watched Galen carefully. "What I want is simple. I want out of here. I want a lift to somewhere more civilized, somewhere a man of my talents will be appreciated."

Galen struggled to keep from smiling. This couldn't be better; he'd get Lucas out of here onto his ship and then... Lucas continued, "And what I'm offering is to leave here quietly. I'll just take Angel and we'll be on our way."

Galen was appalled; he couldn't let Angel go with Lucas. [God knows what will happen to her when he gets bored with her, as he will.] He kept his face immobile as he tried to give the impression that he was considering Lucas's offer. "And if I say no? What then, Lucas?"

"Then I take Angel out of here, up into the hills, wait for you and the others to leave, then come back and take over. I could keep myself entertained with Angel, Demon, and Lily for some time." Lucas smiled lasciviously, and it was obvious what entertainment he had in mind. "I'll probably have to kill the shape-shifter, though. She's too risky to keep her around."

Galen smiled. He didn't give a damn about what happened to the witches, but he knew that his friends would care. "Not enough, Lucas. If you want me to take you out of here, I need something else from you." Lucas nodded to indicate that Galen should continue. "I want Angel. You're not taking her as a hostage. You can keep her with you until we arrive at our destination, but then you let her go. I'll bring her back here to her sisters."

Lucas grinned at him. "Planning on a little fun on the way back, are you? She's worth a ride, Galen. Liveliest little mover I've had under me for a long time. Well, not just under me. She has a way with that mouth of hers." Galen became aware that he was reddening with anger at the way Lucas talked about Angel and tried to clamp down on his reaction. He waited for Lucas to continue. "Well, I don't know, Galen. You're asking me to give up a lot. Where am I gonna find someone as willing and able as Angel? A man has his needs, after all. And she's not gonna want to leave me, you know. I've been showing her just how a real man can satisfy her. You think you can satisfy her, Galen? Or is it true what they say about wizards?" Lucas paused, grinning up at Galen. "Is it true that the size of your staff is in inverse proportion to the size of your manhood? That's a mighty big staff you've got there, Galen."

Galen fought to keep his temper, knowing that Lucas was deliberately goading him. "Are you always this rude to people from whom you need help? I thought you were brighter than that."

Lucas grinned. "Oh, you're too good a target to miss, Magic Man. Tell you what. I'll give up Angel when we get where we're goin', on one condition." He leaned forward again and pinned Galen with his stare. "She has to agree. She's a free woman, Galen. You can't decide for her. We'll leave that decision to her."

Galen hid the triumph he felt. The issue would never arise. Once he had Lucas on board the ship, he'd never walk out alive. Angel would never have to choose. He paused again, staring at Lucas, giving the impression he was thinking about the offer, then said, "Done."

Lucas stood abruptly and held out his hand, almost defying Galen to use the gesture to attack him. Galen shook the hand offered to him. Lucas smiled lazily. "We've got a deal, Technomage. When do we leave?"

Galen considered. He didn't want the others to know his plans. He knew that her sisters would object to him taking Angel away from them, even temporarily. The least they knew about his deal with Lucas, the better. So, it would be best for them to leave when the others weren't around. He decided, then replied, "Dawn. No. Just before, when it's still dark." Lucas nodded and Galen turned to leave.

Just as he approached the door, Lucas spoke again. "Oh, Galen, I've got something for you." Galen turned to see that Lucas was holding a data crystal out toward him. He took it and looked at it, then looked at Lucas quizzically.

"What's this?"

Lucas smiled. "Let's call it insurance. I know that you're a man of your word, but our truce expires when we leave this room. How do I know what you have planned for me when we're aboard your

ship? So I thought I'd better make sure that it was in your interests to deliver me safe and sound to where I want to go."

Galen frowned down at the data crystal again, listening to Lucas, but not looking at him. "Insurance? What do you mean?"

Lucas turned and sat back down on the sofa. "Let me fill in some background for you. You know I was in that damn Box for a long time don't you, Galen?" Galen nodded, keeping his head down. [Where's he going with this?] Lucas's voice continued, "Well, during that time, a number of people carried the Box. A while back now, one of those people was a Technomage." Galen tensed. He hadn't known that. He kept his eyes on the data crystal, not willing to let Lucas see his reaction.

The drawl in Lucas's voice got stronger. "Surprises you, don't it? He was a bit of a rogue. Just like you, he got thrown out of the order." There was a pause. Galen stayed focused on the crystal. "But just like you, he knew everything there is to know about your order. And I know what he knew." The voice was dark and threatening now. "Including where you got your technology, your 'magic'. There's a lot of people who would like to know that, Galen. How much is it worth to you for them not to find out about your order's long and profitable relationship with the Shadows?"

Galen's hand moved involuntarily, bringing his staff up to strike. As he looked up he stared straight into the sights of the crossbow, which Lucas had reloaded while he talked.

"You disappoint me again, Magic Man. I thought you were a man of your word. You wouldn't attack me when our truce is still in force, would you?" Lucas's voice oozed sarcasm as he held the crossbow steadily. He nodded towards the data crystal that Galen still held. "And you might want to take a look at that before you try anything else."

Galen looked back down at the crystal, working hard to regain his control. "What's on it?"

Lucas grinned maliciously. "A copy of some messages I've sent, telling what I know about the Technomages. They're all time-delayed, and they've already been sent. It doesn't matter how many systems you can infect with a virus. One or more will get through, but if I'm around to stop them, they'll never get delivered. 'Course, if anything happens to me, the messages go through. You'll never know when the next one is due to be delivered, Galen. You'd better take good care of me."

Galen swallowed convulsively. He knew he couldn't allow the secrets of his order to be revealed. "Where have you sent the messages?"

Lucas laughed aloud. "You think I'm gonna tell you that? Well, I'm gonna surprise you. I'll tell you some of them, but not all. Copies have gone to Sheridan's office on Minbar, and to the Rangers. More copies are on their way to Earth Gov, IPX, and Edgar's Industries on Mars. Then I thought the Narn might be interested; they love the Shadows don't they? Oh, and Liz Lochley's office on B5 can expect a special delivery some day. There are others, but that's enough for now."

He dropped the crossbow back onto the sofa, taunting Galen with his total security. "So we're gonna stick to the terms of our deal, Galen. You're gonna take me and Angel to Babylon 5, and you're gonna deliver us safely. And to be certain of that, you'd better make damned sure that your friends don't come after me before dawn."

Galen's mind raced as he stared at Lucas, desperately trying to find a way out of this predicament. He had to stop those messages somehow, but couldn't see a way, not without giving Lucas what he

wanted. And how would he explain to Gideon and his crew why he'd helped Lucas to escape, taking Angel with him? He hardly heard Lucas's final words.

"Just think of it as a blow at the enemy, Galen. The witches' powers won't be nearly so great with Angel gone. Did you think of that?"

Galen looked down at the crystal in his hand, then back up at Lucas. "I'll see you at my ship just before dawn." He spun and left the room, his mind in turmoil, unaware of the satisfied smile that spread across Lucas's face. Lucas had won the game, and he hadn't had to make a single sacrifice.

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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}