

# The Witches of Eriadne: Toil and Trouble - Part 5: Breaking Away

by [The Space Witches](#)

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Luke Raven

## Chapter 2

Lucas carried Angel out into the dark of the plain below the castle. He knew that Galen's ship was here somewhere, but in the darkness, the black ship was invisible. He stopped for a moment and readjusted his hold on Angel, then closed his eyes and focused on sensing Galen's presence. [Got it.] He turned to his right, and as the night gradually lifted with the first pre-dawn light, he saw the outline of the ship ahead. As Lucas moved toward it, a light appeared in the belly of the ship as a ramp was dropped. [Damn him, he could have turned the light on sooner. He's determined to make this difficult.] Lucas was half amused at Galen's minor show of rebellion. [Let him have his fun, as long as he does what I want.]

Galen appeared at the top of the ramp and watched Lucas approach. When he saw Angel lying unconscious in Lucas's arms, he rushed down the ramp to join them. Lucas was getting a little tired of carrying Angel after all this time, so he held her out to Galen, saying, "You want her? You carry her for a while." Galen took her gently into his arms while Lucas watched, rotating his shoulders to ease

some of the strain they'd been under. His lips curled into a patronizing smile as he saw the look of complete adoration on Galen's face as he looked down at Angel and held her close to him. "Make the most of it, Magic Man. If she were awake she'd be trying to rip your balls off. She's not exactly your number one fan, you know."

Galen looked up sharply and spoke. "What's the matter with her? Why is she unconscious?"

Lucas laughed. "I had to carry out a little surgery. Let's just say she's in post-operative recovery."

Galen's face turned to thunder. "What do you mean? What have you done to her? I swear if you've..."

Lucas interrupted him. "Don't swear, Galen, it's not nice in front of a lady." He grinned and continued, "Didn't you know that these sisters were linked in their heads? They talk to each other with their minds and link together to become more powerful. Isn't that combined power what you used to put me back in the Box? Well, how in the hell did you think they'd react if I just waltzed out of here with Angel? They'd have known about it in an instant and been right on my tail. So I broke the link, and her sisters are going to be in the same state as she is now, which should keep your friends up at the castle occupied for a while. So let's go, before they figure out what's happenin', shall we?"

His hand settled on Galen's shoulder to turn and push him up the ramp. His hand felt the implants in Galen's back in the instant before Galen pulled away from his touch. "Bad case of acne you've got there, son." Lucas grinned.

Galen swept away, carrying Angel in his arms up the ramp. Lucas shifted the carry-bag on his shoulder, then turned for one last look up at the castle, now clearly visible in the dawn light.

Lucas closed his eyes and sent out a thought to his son, [I'm coming for you, boy,] then turned and walked up the ramp into Galen's ship.

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Gideon stood at the foot of the infirmary bed, looking down at Deborah. She was totally still and her face had no color. He could hardly detect the rise and fall of her chest as she breathed, but Raven insisted that she was breathing, just deeply unconscious. Lily and Ilas were in a similar condition, which couldn't be coincidence. Gideon heard the door open behind him and turned to see the Guard Captain in the doorway, holding a pair of his boots and one of his shirts out toward him. Gideon nodded his thanks and pulled the boots and shirt on quickly.

Nikarran spoke, his voice low and gritty. "I thought you might want to join us. I'm taking some men to the Lady Angel's rooms. I think that could be the source of this problem." He nodded toward Deborah's motionless form.

Gideon nodded vehemently. "Damn right I'll join you. And if Lucas isn't behind this, then I'll eat my... Well, I'll think of something. Let's go." With a last lingering glance at Deborah, Gideon left her room.

He and the Guard Captain trotted through the corridors until they came to a landing on the second floor, a short way from Angel's rooms. Four Brakiri guards were waiting for them, each armed with a crossbow and a sword. Two of them carried spare weapons that were offered to Nikarran and Gideon. The Guard Captain took the weapons with practiced ease, while Gideon declined the sword and held the crossbow gingerly. One of the Brakiri loaded a bolt into the stock and wound the spring for him.

Nikarran watched, then said, "Just point it and pull the trigger." He showed Gideon where it was. "But remember, you have only one shot." Gideon nodded and moved forward toward Angel's rooms. The Brakiri moved to intercept him. "No. My men lead the way; you're with me at the back. It's still possible that Lady Angel will knock us all out or freeze us as we approach and I have orders from the Lady Demon that you are to be safeguarded at all times."

This was news to Gideon, who'd had no idea that the guards had been given any orders about him or his crew, but he could see that the Brakiri wasn't tolerating any arguments, so nodded his acquiescence. They moved down the corridor in pairs, with Gideon and the Captain bringing up the rear. When they arrived at Angel's rooms, Nikarran gestured for one guard to stand each side of the door, one standing upright, the other crouching low. A third stood facing the door, while the Captain and Gideon stood off to one side. At a nod from Nikarran, the third guard raised his foot and kicked the door hard, bursting it open. The guards stationed on either side of the door rushed into the room, one high, one low, their crossbows raised and ready. Gideon tried to move forward and found himself stopped by the Brakiri's hand on his arm. "Wait," he ordered.

The other two guards had followed hard on the heels of the first and all four disappeared from Gideon's view. He hated being a spectator, and wanted desperately to be in the forefront of the fight, but Nikarran wasn't budging an inch. One of the guards appeared in the doorway and waved them in. Gideon darted forward and now the Guard Captain released his arm. They entered Angel's rooms together.

Again, Gideon was first hit by the overall impression of chaos. He couldn't tell if the mess was the same as he'd seen there before, or if the guards had been searching. Two of them were prowling the room, tapping the walls expectantly. [What are they looking for?] It was obvious that they'd found no one present.

Gideon walked through to the bedroom, a place that brought back uncomfortable memories. The first thing that hit him was the smell. Lucas had been busy. He couldn't tell whether anything was missing, but the state of the bed spoke volumes about what had been happening in the room during the hours before the occupants had left. One of the guards handed a scarf to Nikarran, who held it up for Gideon's inspection. At first he couldn't see what they'd found, it just looked like a red scarf. Then he saw the darker red marks on it, almost dark enough to be called brown rather than red. He realized that the marks were blood, but was relieved that there wasn't much to see. There were no other signs of blood in the room.

Gideon spoke aloud for the first time since they'd entered the rooms. "Looks like she may not have gone willingly, but didn't struggle too hard." The Captain nodded. At that moment one of the guards found what they'd been looking for, and the secret door to Angel's workshop opened. Two guards went in, then one reappeared and waved that all was clear. Gideon entered. His immediate feeling was of surprise; this place was tidy. Angel could keep things neat when she wanted to, after all. He looked around at the books and bottles and shook his head. [Magic? Nonsense.]

He turned to Nikarran and said, "Well, they're gone. The question is, where?" They walked back through the bedroom into the living room and at that moment, heard a rumbling from outside the castle. Gideon strode to the window and saw Galen's ship silhouetted against the rising sun, ascending rapidly. He looked back at the Guard Captain as he spoke through gritted teeth. "I think that could be the answer to my question."

Gideon walked back toward the infirmary, keying Galen's ship's call sign on his commlink, but received no response. Somehow, that didn't surprise him. Galen had betrayed him once before and at that time he'd decided that Galen's value to the mission outweighed the offence, but Galen had given his word then that he'd never betray Gideon's trust again. Gideon had decided to give him another chance, and had accepted his word.

Now, the Technomage had broken that word and betrayed the trust that Gideon had placed in him. Worse, he'd actively lied. He'd told Gideon that Lucas wouldn't move from Angel's rooms, prevented him from posting guards, and promised to meet Gideon at breakfast, when he'd already made plans to take Lucas off the planet. Gideon could only wonder at Galen's reasons. He was sure they existed, but nothing could excuse Galen this time. As far as Gideon was concerned, if he ever saw the Technomage again in this lifetime, it would be too soon.

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When Lily woke up, her head hurt terribly. She whimpered and turned onto her side, curling up in a fetal position as much as possible with her swollen belly, and covered her head with her arms.

John and Luke, who had been talking just inside the door to her room in case someone else called for the Doctor, rushed to her side.

"What is it, Lily, how do you feel? Are you in pain?" Luke asked, sitting down on the bed beside her and stroking her hair. John squatted down and touched her arm, letting her know he was there.

"What did he do? Why did he take her away from us?" Lily's muffled voice emerged from under her arms and hair. The pain she felt was obvious.

"Who, Lily? And what happened to you and your sisters?" Matheson asked softly. He had to keep his shields at maximum to avoid feeling her pain.

When Lily finally lowered her arms and looked at him, then at Raven, they could see tears emerge from her red-rimmed eyes. Her lips were trembling, and her skin was still paler than normal, although not as bad as when she'd fainted. "Lucas," she finally uttered, almost inaudibly, with shock, pain, and hatred giving her voice a strange sound. She squeezed her eyes shut, trying to compose herself, then said a bit louder, "He broke the link." Her eyes opened and looked at John. "He broke Angel's link! I can't feel her anymore; she's gone!" New tears emerged from her eyes as she squeezed them shut again, leaving John and Luke to stare at each other. Raven had feared something like that.

Lily was crying freely now. Luke gathered her up in his arms, and John sat down on her other side, both men holding her as she was wracked by sobs, giving whatever comfort they could.

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Lily had finally calmed down and was lying on the bed, her headache slowly improving. John lay behind her, holding her softly, while Luke had gone to check on Demon and Ilas. Much worse than the pain was the void where Angel's presence used to be. [If no one else will do it, I will kill him one day!] She felt her daughter kick and looked down at her belly, stroking it softly. [You're right, I shouldn't think like this, but I can't help it.]

"Is everything all right?" John asked, having felt her gesture.

Lily smiled sadly. "They're all right, Sweet-Face. Our daughter just reminded me that I should also think of the good things I still have."

John squeezed her, grateful that their children hadn't been hurt.

Luke came back, hands in his pants pockets, thinking hard. John and Lily sat up, and he joined them, taking Lily's right hand into his. He looked down at her slim, graceful fingers for a few seconds, then up into her eyes. "I'm staying."

Lily stared at him, feeling a smile spread on her lips as Luke's words sank in.

"You mean...you won't come with us when we leave?" John asked.

Luke shook his head, his face set. "I can't leave them alone. I know I won't be able to do much if Lucas comes back, but I can at least help if there are any problems with the babies." He squeezed Lily's hand and smiled as he saw her beaming at him. "You'll probably get tired of me within a week..."

"Oh, never!" Lily said and threw her arms around him.

Luke held her and looked at John, who nodded, then frowned as something occurred to him. "What about your sister?"

Lily leaned back. "Yes, what about her?"

Luke sighed. "I'll have to call her. I should be able to make an arrangement with Dr. Roberts, who's taking my patients when I'm away. He's been very busy, too, so I think he would be glad to have another helping hand."

He stood. "I'll ask Gideon if I can use the Comm. equipment in Demon's rooms."

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Raven sat in Demon's room, waiting for Sara to answer his call. Finally, she appeared on the screen in her nightgown, with her hair a mess. She was barely able to hide her yawn behind her hand. When she saw him, she was suddenly wide awake. "Luke! Is everything all right? I didn't expect to hear from you until you got back!"

Luke smiled, slightly embarrassed. "Well, yes, more or less, we're all right. Uh, sorry to call in the middle of the night. I didn't think about that." He took a deep breath, then continued, "My coming back is the reason I've called. I've decided it would be better to stay here until the babies are born."

Sara stared at him. "Babies? You didn't tell me..." Her voice trailed off as the realization sunk in. "Oh, now are *you* going to be a father?" she asked, and eyed him expectantly.

Luke beamed. "Among others. You'll be the auntie of a little girl. And a little boy, though only indirectly."

His sister laughed. "Are you telling me Fire-Lily is expecting twins and one is yours and the other is Matheson's?"

He shrugged. "Unlikely, but not impossible."

Sara stared at him a moment, then shook her head, grinning. "Well, congratulations to all three of you!" Then she remembered the other part of what he'd said. "How long will you stay there?"

Luke sighed. "They--Lily and two of her sisters--are in their fifth month, so I'll have to stay at least four more months." Before Sara could say anything, he went on, "Listen, I want you to contact Steve Roberts and ask if he could use your help, I'm sure he'll be happy to have you. And he shouldn't worry about payment; he'll be doing me a big favor."

Sara smiled warmly. "I'll contact him, don't worry about me. You just make sure my nephew and niece will be all right, and their cousins, too!" She lowered her voice and added, "And let me know how you are from time to time, otherwise I'll think you died from exhaustion!"

He returned her smile. "I will. Thank you, little sister."

She put out her tongue, then grinned. "You're welcome, big brother. Take care!"

"I will. Sleep well." He touched the screen with his fingertips. She did the same, then winked at him and signed off.

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On Deneb IV, Sara Raven returned to her bed. "Did you hear that, Dr. Roberts?" she asked the man lying there. "Seems we get to spend even more time together." She kissed him softly, then lay down against his side.

"He doesn't know about us?" Dr. Steve Roberts asked as he put his arm around her.

"Nope. Didn't hear from him since he left, and I didn't want to tell him now. He seemed preoccupied somehow." Sara frowned for a moment, slightly worried, but decided her brother was old enough to look after himself. Besides, she knew that he would tell her about it when he was ready. "I'll do it the next time he calls."

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Gideon awoke to the feel of a hand gently stroking the back of his head. He looked up to see Deborah looking down at him, smiling sadly. He rolled off the bed, moving to where he could lean over and kiss her.

Gideon had stayed in Deborah's room in the infirmary for the past twenty-four hours, only leaving to use the bathroom. He'd had food sent in to him so he could stay with her, watching and hoping that she'd come round. Raven had said that there was nothing more he could do, they just had to wait. Lily and Ilas had regained consciousness the previous evening and explained what had happened. The link with Angel had been broken, causing great pain and confusion, and they knew that Deborah would be the worst affected. Angel was her blood sister and they were close, closer than they ever really let anyone else see. Lily had refused to give him more details, but had told him that Deborah would be devastated by the loss of her sister. So Gideon had stayed and waited, to be sure that he was there when she awoke.

Gideon had sat in a chair next to Deborah's bed all day, just watching her breathe. After nightfall, he'd climbed onto her bed alongside her and rested his head on her shoulder. That way he could feel her

breathing. It was a tight squeeze on the bed, but she was so still, there was just enough space. He'd fallen asleep eventually and not woken until he felt her touch.

He lifted his head from the kiss and touched Deborah's cheek. It had a little more color than the previous day, but she was still pale and Gideon could see the pain in her face and eyes. He spoke as softly as he could. "How are you feeling? Are you still in pain?" She closed her eyes and nodded, then winced as the pain was increased by the gesture.

Gideon reached for some pills and a glass of water by the side of the bed. "Raven said that these would help the pain, and not to worry they won't hurt the baby." He helped her sit up and take the pills, then drink. He lowered her carefully back to the pillow, where he saw that she was watching him closely.

Deborah finally spoke. "She's gone, Matthew." Her deep, sultry voice was barely a whisper and cracked slightly as she said his name.

He stroked her cheek with the back of his fingers. "I know. Galen took her and Lucas off the planet. We don't know where he's taken them." Gideon watched as Deborah turned her head away from him, trying to hide the tears that filled her eyes.

"I can't feel her anymore. It's like a piece of my soul has been ripped out." Gideon could almost feel the pain emanating from her. Was she projecting again? He didn't think so; he'd have felt it much more strongly if she were. He watched as she pulled herself back under control and looked back at him before whispering again. "But maybe this is for the best."

He looked down at her in stunned amazement. How could Deborah losing her sister like this ever be considered 'for the best'? Gideon asked, "Why?"

Deborah looked straight into his eyes. "I don't know what Lucas will do with her. I can hope that he won't hurt her. I think he probably will, but I can hope." She paused and Gideon could see the effort her next words cost her. "But if she'd stayed, you would have arrested her and charged her with murder. If she'd been convicted, I know your penalty for that crime, death of personality. She would have been lost to me forever, and I could never have forgotten that you were the one responsible."

Gideon wanted desperately to deny what Deborah said, but he couldn't. If he were to keep his promise to Dureena, then that could well have been the outcome. Worse, it still could go that way. Just because Angel and Lucas were gone, it didn't invalidate his promise. Gideon would have to go on looking for them, but he didn't have to tell Deborah that now. He remained quiet while she continued. "This way, I'll miss her every day, but I can hope that she's well and I don't have to blame you for losing her. But I do blame Galen. I know he's your friend, but I never want to see him on this planet again."

Gideon leaned forward and kissed her again. "That's one thing we can agree on." He watched as Deborah pushed herself into an upright position, the sheet falling to her waist. He grabbed the robe he had brought from her rooms and wrapped it around her shoulders, helping her get her arms into the sleeves.

She looked up at him and said, "I want to go back to my rooms. Will you help me?"

Gideon nodded. "Let me call Raven first. He just wants to check that none of this has hurt the baby." He knew that Deborah might protest about a checkup for her own sake, but she wouldn't do anything to put the baby at risk. He watched as she lay back on the pillows and waited for him to call Raven.

A few moments later, Raven arrived and checked her over. He nodded to Deborah and told her that she was fit to leave, but to take it easy for a few days, as she needed to recover from the shock. Gideon helped her sit up and swing her legs around to the edge of the bed. She wobbled slightly as she stood, but Gideon put his arm around her waist and helped her stand. He couldn't help thinking of the day they'd met, when she'd done the same for him. The similarity hadn't escaped her, either. She looked round at him as he held her up, and smiled as she said, "Take me back to Tara, Rhett."

Gideon kissed Deborah's forehead and grinned back at her. "Well, frankly my dear, I *do* give a damn." They made their way back to her rooms.

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## The Witches of Eriadne: Toil and Trouble

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