

Chapter 20. A child's wish

September 15th 1512; (North of the city of Nafrece)

"My lord, why are we doing in such a dread place?" William Baker asked his master as he gazed upon the moonlit ruins of an ancient megalith circle.

"Ah Good William I understand the dread you feel. But this place is far enough from the prying eyes of our enemies. Have you studied the ritual carefully?" Peter Burton replied and asked his loyal servant.

"Yes Milord. Though I risk my eternal soul by doing this ritual, I shall serve your Lordship in any way possible." William answered.

"Very good, we approach the ruins."

"Milord, may I ask a favor?"

"Yes, William."

"The girl Elsa..."

"Yes what about the girl? Her stories are quite amusing; horseless carriages and ships that fly through the air like the bird."

"After this is all over, I would like to take her as a daughter into my family."

"I do not see why not. She is amusing...I shall allow it...provided she does what she is told."

"Thank you Milord."

William recited the ritual and three artifacts became one and a glowing maiden dressed in a shimmering dress appeared.

"I am the Goddess Europa! The one who has gathered the artifacts, the ones who bore the artifacts speak your heart's desire."

A tall red headed maiden stepped forward. "I wish for eternal beauty."

Europa slightly frowned. **"I grant your wish, but for your selfish wish a price must be paid. You shall be beautiful in face and flesh but true love will be not yours in this lifetime."**

A short blond maiden stepped forward as the red head stepped back. "I wish to be forever wealthy."

Europa frowned again. **"I grant your wish, but your wish is selfish so a price must be paid. Wealthy you shall be but true happiness shall never be yours."**

The child Elsa stepped forward her green eyes shown in the torch and moonlight. "I wish for my ancestors who were born before me to be in love with each other when they meet so we can exist."

Europa smiled warmly at Elsa. **"I grant your wish little one. I know you know not fully what love is but your heart is in the right place. So I ask you to bear the Ring of Morigan one last time. You shall cross the ocean of time to do so. The ring shall guide you."**

Elsa held out her hand and Europa placed the ring in her hands and Elsa disappeared in a flash of light. William was shocked.

"What has happened to Elsa?!" William asked understandably concerned.

Europa smiled. **"No harm has come to Elsa. She has crossed the sea of time."**

Peter slightly frowned at William for his outburst.

"I wish that my entire family shall be forever recognized for our noble blood and may no one dispute it."

Peter spoke his wishes.

Europa smirked slightly in a cunning fashion. **I grant your wishes. But know they come with a price. Your families blood shall mix with a commoner and that child of that commoner shall be recognized fully as noble."**

Peter laughed as dismissed it as tripe as Europa disappeared in a flash of light...

(Modern day Nafrece)

"That was a strange story mom. But I can see why you wanted to show me this. We have to get this to Margaret and Vanessa!" Elenore claimed holding a very old journal.

"Sweetie it's almost midnight and I doubt either of them are up. We'll fax a copy of it to them in the morning."

"I wonder if this Elsa still has the ring. At least we know what she looks like." Then a look of horror crossed Elenore's face. "What if that's who Alice is hunting for?"

Meg sighed. "You just found out about Elsa so I doubt Alice knows her."

"I'll make a copy of this and go to bed." Elenore said calming down.

"Good idea, we have a lot of searching tomorrow. Hope the weather clears up, it's been really pouring for the last few hours." Meg said as she began to put the journal through the scanner.

Meg and Elenore scanned the pages of the journal and made print outs. Then they headed to bed.

"Good night mom."

"Good night sweetie, try to get some sleep okay."

"I'll try mom..." Elenore said she entered the guest room.

Margaret, Madlax and Vanessa had been following ghostly images of Elenore's grandma for the last half hour after Margaret decided to wander around the house looking for more images or visions. Madlax was trying to get her to go to bed when Elenore's grandma appeared in the hall. Madlax ran to get Vanessa and after she hooked up with Margaret they began to follow her first to the east wing. The ground and basement of the east was well tended but when they got to the second floor they noticed the dust all over the place. For some reason Elenore never cleaned here, but they did notice in some spot where she may have walked. They continued to follow Elenore's grandma up three flights of stairs, the dust becoming a bit thick in some areas. When they couldn't go any farther they noticed her pulling a light fixture and then she disappeared.

"Wonder what she wanted us to see?" Madlax questioned.

"I guess we pull that light fixture and see what happens." Margaret replied.

"I'll do it." Vanessa said and she pulled the fixture down and a part of the wall slid back to reveal another flight of stairs. Margaret was about to go up when Vanessa stopped her.

"Hold on Margaret. There's something wrong here. Let me check, okay?"

"Okay Vanessa." Margaret replied as Vanessa put her hand against the wall and concentrated.

She frowned and turned to Margaret and Madlax. "There's a couple of traps here. Elenore's been here as well but not lately."

"If there are traps how did Elenore avoid them?" Madlax asked.

"That's a good question. What are you doing Vanessa?" Margaret asked as Vanessa moved her hand on the wall opposite the light switch and pressed a button. A light bulb came to life illuminating the hall.

Vanessa pointed to a small symbol on the wall. "Normally I wouldn't know what that symbol meant if it wasn't for the bracelet. This symbol is a Soldat symbol for a hidden light switch and warns of the trap."

Vanessa said pointing the obvious light switch. Vanessa looked on the stairs and she saw another couple symbols on a stair. "See where those symbols are on that stair. We should avoid stepping on that stair. There's a deactivation switch on the top of the stairs."

Vanessa went first followed by Margaret and then Madlax. They took care not to step on the trapped stair and when they reached the top Vanessa pulled the deactivation switch. On the landing was a door with the paint chipping away. Then Elenore's grandma appeared again holding a key and she appeared to unlock the door and then she disappeared.

"Do we have the key to that door?" Madlax asked, curiously about what was on the other side of the door.

Margaret pulled out a huge key chain. She took a minute and when she found the key she held it up and smiled. "Yep, we do. It's a good thing Elenore left us her keys..." Margaret said cheerfully at first and dismayed at the end.

"Are there any traps on the door?" Margaret asked trying to keep herself from going into a funk.

"No there isn't. Try the key Margaret."

Margaret stuck the key in and unlocked the door. "Wait what if there are traps on the other side of the door?"

"Let me check." Vanessa said and she touched the wall and concentrated. "There are no traps thankfully." Margaret opened the door and fumbled for the light switch. When the light came on they saw only a bed and a nightstand covered in dust. The drawer of the nightstand was on the floor. Vanessa picked it up and looked it over just in case there was anything important written on it. Then she checked the nightstand and finding nothing there she put the drawer back in. Margaret and Madlax were focused on the bed and the contents assumedly from the drawer. On the bed there was an old style plug in vibrator, a pair of glasses, and photo of a nude brunette woman in her twenties, a pen, and a large journal. Margaret picked up the photo and looked at the back. In fading ink letters she could read; "To my beloved Elenore. Forever yours, Claudette." At first Margaret thought it referred to her Elenore then she saw the date "May 20th 1964".

The photo raised more questions than answers; who was Claudette? Was she Elenore's lover? Was she the other half of Noir? Margaret mulled over those questions when Madlax got her attention.

Holding out the journal Madlax said. "Margaret, take a look at this."

Margaret took the journal and sat on the bed and began to read the entries. This was definitely Elenore's grandma's journal. As she continued she learned that Claudette was her partner both in love and Noir. Then Margaret's expression turned to horror as she read the following passage;

"August 3rd 1964,

Came home from food shopping to find the door broken in. When I went inside I saw that there had been a struggle. I saw multiple bullet casings on the floor as well as a good amount of blood. I feared the worst for Claudette. I called out for her. Hearing no answer I followed the trail of blood to the bedroom where I <obvious tear stain> found Claudette. She had been shot and disemboweled. Written on the walls in large letters in her blood. DIE HOMOS!!!

At first I wondered who did this, but in a corner I noticed a code symbol that she and I use. I knew who did it...our fellow Soldats...we've been betrayed. So I grabbed what I could and ran from the house. I took the train from Paris to Nafrece from where I'm writing this entry. Hopefully I can shake them off my trail..."

Margaret showed the entry to Vanessa and Madlax and they reacted in horror as Margaret did.

Margaret was hesitant to read on in fear of finding more disturbing entries but Madlax and Vanessa prompted her on. She read on; the next few entries detailed her getting into Nafrece and her encounters with John Baker who was strangely persistent and the feelings she had for him which she dismissed as her need for human companionship.

Then a few entries later she read about their wedding and Meg's birth four years later in 1968.

Interspersed between those entries Elenore had written about her feelings and longing for Claudette.

Then she wrote about the birth of Walter in 1971. She found quite a few entries regarding him; John's harshness on him, her concerns for him and how she knew that he was gay and her vow to protect him. She found a few about her father and Meg, how her father was hitting on Meg. This continued for a few pages till she came across a few more entries;

"March 8th 1989

Despite his marriage to Mistress Anna, Master Richard continues to flirt with Meg. I suspect they're having an affair. Oh Meg...you're a good girl but you can be so dense sometimes.

June 5th 1989

I caught Meg in the bathroom throwing up. I confronted her and my worst fears were realized; the Master had an affair with Meg and impregnated her. I can imagine Mistress' Anna's reaction to this; I fear that a confrontation is inevitable. The thing that angers me the most is that John in his blind loyalty to the Master practically offered up Meg to him. The only good thing about this is we'll have our first grandchild, though a lot earlier than we thought.

That was the last entry; Margaret suspected that the day after that entry was written Altena shot Elenore. Margaret sadly closed the book. "We need to get this to Meg and Elenore in the morning." Margaret said sorrowfully.

"Are you going to show Walter that as well?" Vanessa asked inquisitively.

"I have a feeling that showing that to Walter is a bad idea right now. Especially when he saw his mother being shot." Madlax replied with a sad look on her face.

"I have to agree, he's far too upset right now. Our best option right now is getting this to Meg and let her show Walter."

"That's sounds good, then what about the photo?" Vanessa asked.

Margaret saw a paper clip on the bed and used it to pin the photo inside the journal.

"Madlax or Vanessa, do either of you know how to make a pink lady?" Margaret asked forlornly.

"I thought you didn't drink Margaret." Madlax responded a bit surprised about Margaret's question.

"After what I've read, I need a few. Now I'm beginning to understand why Elenore drinks...I wonder if she read this journal too."

"She probably did...what about those glasses? I found the case near the bed." Madlax asked.

Margaret took the case and put the glasses in them. "Let's give this to Meg as well. I'm sure she'll appreciate something of her mother's. Now let's get out of here. Oh, neither of you answered my question."

"I'll make them Margaret, I don't drink when I'm on duty so it will have to be you and Vanessa."

"I'll have wine. Let's go..."

The trio took the journal and the case, turned out the light and left for downstairs.

Elenore tossed and turned energetically in bed as she slept.

As she dreamed she found herself in the same field of flowers where she died. She wandered as the sounds of war echoed around her. In the middle of the field she saw Margaret dressed in that dress she saw her in that day.

"Margaret, what are you doing here?" Elenore asked.

Margaret frowned. "Go away, you disgust me!" She spat at her.

Elenore was distressed to hear this. "Why Margaret?"

"You wanted to make love with me. I'm your sister you sicko! Plus you let your baby die! You're a murderer too, you hypocrite!"

"I didn't know you were my sister. How was I supposed to know?!" Elenore countered in distress.

"Because she told me." Margaret said pointing to Altena who appeared behind her.

"That's right Margaret; your dear sister is a killer and a pervert." Altena said in a cunning tone.

Hands sprung from the ground and grabbed her by the ankles.

Elenore screamed as they began to pull her into the ground.

Elenore woke up screaming as Meg burst into the room.

"Elenore are you all right?!" Meg asked a crying and shaken Elenore.

Elenore had trouble answering right away and Meg sat next to her on the bed.

"I had another nightmare." Elenore said finally trying to wipe the tears and told her mother what had happened. Elenore was trying to get up from the bed.

"Where are you going?" Meg asked.

"I need a drink..."

"You know that isn't going to solve your problems."

"No offence mom but how would you know?"

"I've had nightmares about the people I've shot as well. Plus I've been shot a few times and sometimes I have dreams about that too." Meg showed Elenore her bullet wound scars.

"So yes, I know...all too well. I did the same thing you're doing now...running to the bottle."

"It's not like I can go to a doctor and tell what I know..."

"Your uncle has made arrangements for you to see someone who has dealt with this sort of things before. She's quite a good therapist, very anti-medication."

"So what do I do for tonight?"

"Let's go have a couple. Margaret handed me a bottle of Irish whiskey before we left. I assume that's what you drink."

Elenore smirked briefly. "Margaret called that one."

"Called what?" Meg asked a bit puzzled.

"She said I would need a few drinks." Elenore said with a slight humph.

"You can have a couple then back to bed, okay?" Meg said as they headed to the kitchen.

Ellis snuggled up against Nadie. Nadie with her eyes still closed reached out to Ellis a small smile was on her face.

At the safe house that Walter brought her Mireille looked out the window wondering where Kirika had gone. From what she got from their conversation she made a couple of very stark conclusions about Walter; either he was blaming himself for everything or he was totally batshit insane. In the morning she would go out and look for Kirika and then get out of Nafrece in the quickest way possible.

Walter had been directing his team to various Soldat safe houses. He wanted Altena even if he had to rip down Nafrece to do it. So far he had come up with nothing; where ever she was she kept herself well hidden. He even had a few urban trackers to watch and follow Chloe. He could've brought her in and interrogated her but he have to explain some things he didn't want to.

The rain began to fall more heavily. Going towards his car he saw a small figure near the street light. On closer inspection the small figure was a female tween holding a very large hatchet that must've been a part of a billhook at some point. The girl's face was staring down at the pavement but Walter got the feeling she was watching him too.

"You abandoned me...I know you hate me...you've always hated me...just like her..." The girl spat out in a bitter yet sad tone.

"I have no idea what you're talking about you shouldn't be out. Drop the weapon NOW!" Walter said drawing his gun.

"Grandpa said you were dead...and I believed him...well I guess I have to fix that won't I?" The girl raised her head with an angry grin and Walter was a bit surprised at first.

"I'll say this one last time drop your weapon!! I'm not in the mood for these games."

"Good! Neither am I!" Alice screeched as she rushed at Walter.

Walter fired his pistol and Alice fell down. "Well I gave her a warning, stupid kid..." He began to say but he was interrupted when he saw Alice get up off the ground.

"You jerk! You wrecked my dress! I'll kill you!! I hate you! I hate you!" Alice screamed as she attacked Walter in the pouring rain...