

Chapter 24. Dancing under the twin moons

Margaret and Vanessa came back with food for Elenore and ice cream for the girls. Margaret placed the tray of food on a stand. Elenore smiled at Margaret and held her hand, squeezing it gently, as she said "Thank you Margaret." Margaret caught the meaning; she was thanking her for earlier as well. Then she handed Susan her ice cream and she began to eat it but not before a cheerful but quick "Thank you" from her as well. Then she handed Laetitia's ice cream to her, and she got a barely audible "thanks" from her.

Madlax came into the room and smiled warmly at the scene.

"Limelda getting restless?" Vanessa asked Madlax.

"No, I wanted to say good night to everyone." Madlax said with a smile. She noticed that everyone's mood had lightened and made a mental note to ask Margaret or Vanessa on what happened.

"Good night Madlax." Elenore said putting down the fork.

"Good night Elenore." Madlax replied slightly chuckling as Susan dripped ice cream on Elenore's leg and she scrambled to clean it up. Then she turned to Duvet.

"Good night Duvie." She said as they hugged each other.

"Good night Madlax."

Then she went to Laetitia and hugged her. Laetitia hesitated for a moment wondering if that was the right response and then she returned the hug.

"Good night." Madlax said with a smile and Laetitia just smiled in return.

"I'll be at the car." Madlax said as she headed out the room.

Vanessa hugged Elenore and then Susan. "You two take care. We'll see you in the morning."

"Miss Vanessa?"

"Yes Susan."

"Thank you."

Vanessa smiled and hugged Susan again. "You're very welcome."

"Good night Vanessa." Elenore said smiling and Vanessa was happy to see her smile.

After wishing Meg and Laetitia good night Vanessa went to the car.

Margaret and Elenore hugged each other for a bit. Then she hugged Susan, Meg and Laetitia.

"Bye Elenore. We'll see you tomorrow! Good night!" Margaret said as she left.

Margaret was in high spirits; she was glad that she was able to do something for the people she loved. It had been a long day for her and she was ready to go home. She caught up with Vanessa and they went to the car.

Once they got there they got in and drove for home.

Carrossea, seeing no one was home at the Burton residence, decided to leave so he placed his hand on his suitcase when he heard the distinct sounds of gun hammers being pulled back. He slightly opened his jacket before he held up his hands.

From the sounds of it there were four people, he weighed his options as he was about to turn and draw his revolver. Then he heard a familiar voice. "Oh it's him. What the hell is he doing here?"

"Hello to you too...Limelda." Carrossea said with a smirk, recognizing the voice.

"Carrossea why are you...oh I forgot I invited you. I'm sorry we've had a busy few days. Umm...you can put your hands down now." Margaret said as she walked in front.

"Thank you Margaret." Carrossea said as he put his hands down in relief.

"How come you're here at this hour with a suitcase?" Margaret asked seeing the suitcase.

"Long story, but I do have information on the Ring of Morrigan and the artifacts themselves."

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Vanessa walked up to the mansion and placed her right hand on the wall. She concentrated as she searched the house for any intruders, listening devices, booby traps, or Walter. Finding nothing she turned to the rest of the group and smiled.

"The house is clear. Nobody came while we were out." Vanessa said as Margaret unlocked the door and she beckoned Carrossea to come inside as well.

Margaret was about to ask Elenore to make some tea when she remembered she wasn't with them. She chuckled to herself. I'll go make some tea I'm sure everyone here could use a cup. Once the tea is made we'll talk Carrossea, okay?" Margaret asked as she headed to the kitchen.

Carrossea noticed that Elenore was noticeably absent. He weighed who would give him an answer; asking Limelda was out of the question and he doubted that he would get a straight answer from Madlax. So he asked Vanessa.

"Miss Rene, I noticed that Miss Baker isn't here. Is she all right?" Carrossea asked with some genuine concern.

Vanessa picked up on his concern but felt it wasn't his business. "She's fine, she had to do something."

Vanessa replied as vague as she could get it.

"I...know..." Carrossea heard Poupee's voice taunting him.

"I hope she gets home safely." Carrossea said trying to fish for a reaction.

"She will." Vanessa said vaguely.

"I could tell you if you just asked me." Poupee taunted Carrossea some more.

Carrossea, noticing that he wasn't getting anywhere, figured he might as well relax while he could.

"Could I please sit down?" Carrossea asked.

"Of course, follow me." Vanessa said as he noticed Madlax talking with Limelda in a corner.

Vanessa led him to the living room where he took a seat and sat down. When he got comfortable he looked within.

"So what do you know?" He asked Poupee a bit frustrated.

"Well, gee. That's not a nice way to ask." Poupee said with a grin on his face that he knew something that Carrossea didn't.

"Fine. Could you please tell me what you know?"

"Much better. If you're looking for Elenore she isn't here." Poupee said with a grin.

"No kidding. Is that all or do you have more...please?"

"She's in the hospital."

"Is she all right? Is she hurt? And how do you know?"

"Hmmm...She's fine, not hurt, and Laetitia is in the same room with her."

"Is she watching over Laetitia in case Alice shows up?"

"They caught Alice and put her back. She's with her daughter actually."

"Her what!?" Carrossea said out loud then he caught himself and, thanking God that no one hopefully heard him, continued questioning Poupee.

"I don't know the details and neither does Laetitia, all either of us know is that she's Elenore's daughter."

"Thanks Poupee..." Carrossea said under his breath just as Margaret and Vanessa came back from the kitchen.

"Help yourself Carrossea." Margaret said gesturing to the tray with tea cups and a plate of biscuits on it.

"Thank you Margaret." Carrossea said as he fixed himself a cup of tea, his mind preoccupied with the news he had just heard.

After Margaret had fixed herself a cup and burned her tongue once again she put the cup down and asked. "What information do you have about the ring Carrossea?"

"Before I get to the ring, I found out something very important about the artifacts themselves: once they

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are together and a ritual is spoken they can grant wishes. That's why I was looking for them, so I could wish that Enfant would leave me alone and to get Poupee out of my head."

Margaret tilted her head. "We all ready found that out, but I do appreciate you telling me and I was thinking of bringing Poupee into this world. So that works out for the both of us. So what do you know about the ring?" Margaret asked at the end.

"I know the ring has the power of teleportation and a Japanese girl is the current bearer of it."

"I guess Elsa ran her errand for Europa and gave it to this girl. I wanted to ask Elsa a couple of questions, oh well." Margaret thought.

"How do you know all that?" Vanessa inquired.

"She...showed me...and then she had me run an errand for her...then she transported me here."

Carrossea said then pulled a small white envelope out of his pocket. "She asked me to give this to Elenore. I don't know what's inside it, but she said if I opened it she would skin and boil me alive."

Carrossea said with a little fear at the end.

Margaret took the envelope and looked it over. "I'll give it to her when I see her." She said then she heard the Torc speak. *"Seems Morrigan put him in his place. But that note is important, please do not open it."*

Margaret agreed wondering why either the bearer of the ring or the Goddess of the ring wanted to send Elenore a note. Vanessa wondered about the note as well but she was told not to open it.

"What's in it that's so important that Goddesses themselves don't want it opened? –Vanessa quietly sighed–"Time to hit the books I guess." Vanessa thought to herself.

"I'm going to take a bath and see if I can find out anything else about the ring. Good night Margaret and Good night to you as well Carrossea."

"Good night Miss Rene."

"Good Night Vanessa." Margaret said as Vanessa left the room. When she had left Margaret turned her attention back to Carrossea.

"You're welcome to spend the night here if you want." Margaret said with a smile.

"That's very kind of you Margaret but..."

"But what?" Margaret asked guessing his hesitation may have something to do with Limelda.

"I really don't want to cause you any trouble..." Carrossea replied knowing that lying wasn't an option.

"If you're worried about Limelda, you're a guest just as she is. So I doubt she would start anything. If you're worried about my reaction to you having a relationship with Limelda, don't. That's between her and you and from what I know it's over. I'll admit I do "like" you but I don't know if you really feel the same about me." Margaret said with emphasis on the "like" hoping that Carrossea would pick up on it.

"Wow, you're at a loss for words...she really likes you...why? I haven't the slightest clue. Come on, tell her you like her all ready. You know you do." Poupee teased.

"Let him answer Poupee." Margaret said with a slight giggle knowing she could hear him as well.

"You can hear Poupee?!" Carrossea asked in total surprise.

"Well yes but I think that has something to do with the "Gift" rather than the Torc." Margaret replied in a causal matter of fact tone.

"I do "like" you too Margaret but do you really need someone like me in your life? I'm not exactly "Mr. Squeaky Clean" here and I can just imagine Elenore's reaction." Carrossea answered as honestly as he could. Margaret noticed that he said Elenore's name rather than his usual "Miss Baker" though she did detect some sympathy towards her from him.

"I could possibly guess what you've done and I know there are far worse things that you haven't done. I do know that you're trying to redeem yourself at least to yourself. As for "needing" you, that's my choice isn't it? As for Elenore...well we'll deal with her when the time comes." Margaret said wrapping her arms around Carrossea. Carrossea understandably was flabbergasted by Margaret's assertiveness and he felt himself getting aroused as well.

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“So are you going to spend the night here or not?” Margaret said with an inviting smile.

“I...I guess I’m spending the night.” Carrossea said regaining his composure.

“Good, I’ll show you to your room. Oh are you hungry?” Margaret asked as she led him to his room.

“No I’m not. But thank you for asking.” Carrossea asked as he followed her.

Elenore stared out the window looking at the full moon then the busy nightscape below. She turned and looked at Susan and Laetitia sound asleep. She sat back down and turned to Meg.

“What’s on your mind sweetie?”

“Mom, would it be all right if I spread Margaret’s ashes over Grandpa and Grandma’s grave?”

“I don’t see why not, she’ll be with family. We can do it tomorrow if you want.”

Elenore smiled. “Thank you mom.”

“You’re welcome sweetie. Try to get some sleep sweetie I have a hunch that tomorrow is going to be another long one.” Meg said. Elenore got up and hugged Meg. Then kissed Susan on the top of her head and then she turned out the lights.

A few hours later; Mireille was on the balcony staring at the moon. The last few hours seemed a blur as Kirika reappeared and after pillaging Walter’s cache of money made sure that it appeared that neither of them were ever there. Once they were outside Kirika teleported them to another location.

Then they checked in and once that was done, Kirika told her what had happened since they separated that night. What Kirika told her astonished her; she told her of Walter’s actions which didn’t surprise her one bit as she thought he was already batshit crazy. Then she told about how she eliminated the Soldat counsel and had another person eliminate the leader of Enfant at the same time. That meant both factions were at civil war with each other and within themselves; meaning neither of them would even bother with them. The only person who would give them any problems would be Altena. Kirika assured her that they were the least of her concerns.

Her major worry was the ring on Kirika’s finger. She didn’t know if she was possessed or if she was seeing another side of her that she never saw before. Again Kirika assured her that the ring would be passed to its destined bearer. She felt a tug on her right arm; she turned her head to see Kirika standing behind her looking at her with bedroom eyes.

“Come to bed Mireille...” Kirika said with a smile.

Mireille shrugged and smiled and followed Kirika to bed.

Madlax found Vanessa sitting at the kitchen table reading and sipping a glass of wine.

“What’cha doing up? I thought you went to bed?” Madlax asked with another question on her lips.

“I couldn’t really sleep, so I decided to study...someplace quiet.”

‘Yeah, about that. Is she doing what I think she’s doing?’

“From the sounds of it I would say yes.”

“These artifacts are really starting to worry me...” Madlax began.

Vanessa turned her head towards Madlax and said in a down-to-earth tone. “At first I thought so too. But no, it just means that Margaret has grown up. The last few days are proof of that.”

“I just hope she knows what she’s doing.” Madlax said looking in the direction of Margaret’s bedroom.