

Chapter 9.Chains of hubris

An hour later they arrived at the local university and began walking towards the antiquities department. They got a few stares as they made their way. "We're being watched." Madlax said in hushed voice but loud enough so Vanessa and Elenore would hear.

"Really? Where?" Elenore asked with some apprehension. Vanessa looked and saw the pair of university boys looking at them. She giggled. "Well if you saw three attractive women walking around wouldn't you look?"

"Well...yes...but I find it, well...uncomfortable." Elenore responded.

"No not them. I noticed them when we came in. I'm talking about someone else." Madlax said dismissively, considering the two boys no real threat.

"*Wonder why the old lady is here?*" Madlax said as she noticed a woman with brown hair and glasses standing near a pillar at a nearby building. "You go on without me, I'll catch up later." Madlax said as she headed toward the woman.

"Madlax wait...!" Vanessa said trying to grab Madlax but she was ahead of her.

"Come on Elenore; let's catch Madlax before a gunfight starts."

Madlax went up to the woman which appeared to be an older version of Elenore wearing steel rimmed glasses and holding a digital camera and a sketch pad.

"Hello old lady, it's been awhile." Madlax said to the woman.

"Hello to you too Madlax, Yes it has been awhile. What brings you to Nafrece? And here of all places, finally decided to pick up a book?" The woman asked with good natured sarcasm.

"I was going to ask you the same thing. I heard that you retired after your last job. What happened, couldn't take your walker on the job?" Madlax replied in the same sarcastic tone.

"Ha ha...but you heard right. I'm officially retired; almost bought the farm on the last job. I still do equipment procurement for Three Speed now and then. Why, do you need anything?" The woman asked.

"Not at the moment. It's about time you got out of the bodyguard business. Getting up there old lady. So what brings you to Nafrece?" Madlax grinned.

The woman cocked an eyebrow and grinned. "Did anyone tell you to respect your elders? Besides I was born in Nafrece and decided to take up art as hobby and enjoy my retirement."

"Well, I don't usually see any elders and I'm glad you're taking up a hobby..." Madlax joked.

"Hmmp, you didn't answer my question Madlax. Why are you in Nafrece?" The woman asked noticing Elenore and Vanessa with some veiled alarm.

"Just visiting some friends here. Plus tagging along with them while they look up something." Madlax answered noticing the look of subtle alarm on the older woman's face.

"Is that them?" The woman asked pointing at Elenore and Vanessa who came up behind Madlax. Madlax turned her head. "Yes, that's them."

"Madlax are you okay?" Vanessa asked while Elenore stared at the woman.

"I'm fine. Duvet these are my friends Vanessa Rene and Elenore Baker. Vanessa, Elenore this old lady is Duvet; one the best bodyguards out there."

Duvet raised an eyebrow. "Old lady huh...if I have any gray hairs it would be from having to trying teach you how to respect your elders." Duvet said while Vanessa muffled a chuckle.

"*Mommy where are you going?*" A five year old Elenore asked her mother.

"*I have to go sweetie.*"

"*Why?*" Elenore pleaded.

"*Just please be good for your grandpa...Good bye sweetie, I love you...*" Elenore's mother said tearfully as she walked out the door.

Elenore

Duvet looked at Elenore who looked like she was spacing out. "Is something wrong?" Elenore stopped staring. "Oh I'm sorry Miss Duvet. You remind me of someone I knew." "I do? Who may I ask?" Duvet asked her heart pounding in her chest. "My mother...but she died a long time ago." Elenore said trying to keep from crying. Duvet looked in Elenore eyes and nodded. "I see...you mind doing me a favor Elenore?" "Of course, may I ask what it is?" Elenore asked still reminiscing. "Could you please stand by this pillar here while I take a picture? I think you make an outstanding model and give this drab building here some color." Elenore thought for a second. "*Why not, she reminds me of mother.*" "Okay." Elenore walked to the pillar and stood in front of it in her usual pose. "How's this?" Duvet smiled. "That's perfect...say cheese." Duvet aimed and took Elenore's picture. "Thank you very much. If you want I can send a copy via e-mail or I can call Madlax here to pass it along to you." "Sure thanks. Since you know Madlax, you could give it to her." Elenore said with a smile. "You're welcome. Again thank you very much. I hope I'm not keeping you?" Duvet asked. "Not at all but we do have to get going." Vanessa said. "Then by all means don't let me keep you. It was a pleasure meeting the both of you. I'm glad that Madlax has friends outside of her job." Duvet said with an affectionate smile. "Oh by the way Duvie, if I do need anything can I give you a call?" Madlax asked. "Sure let me give you my number? Still have your phone or do you have someplace I can reach you." Duvet asked. "You can contact her at Burton Manor. Do you need the number?" Elenore innocently added. "N...no, but if Madlax still has her phone I can contact her from there." Duvet responded with a little nervousness. "I still have my phone old lady. Can you remember the number?" Madlax answered with a smirk. "Of course, don't you have someplace to go?" Duvet replied in mock grumpy manner. Madlax chuckled and gave a subtle gesture to Duvet for a hug which Duvet picked up on and gave Madlax a hug. "Anyways it was nice seeing you again Madlax. Anyways give me a call if you need anything and I'll arrange a pick up point." "You too Duvie. Thanks I appreciate it." Madlax said with a warm smile as she began to walk off. "Yeah, yeah get going." Duvet said looking at her sketch pad as which Madlax got the hint. "Nice meeting you Duvet." Vanessa said as she began to follow Madlax. "Same here Vanessa, take care." Duvet replied. Elenore lingered for a few seconds, smiled and caught up the others.

When they were out of earshot of Duvet, Vanessa spoke up with a gleeful smirk. "See, I told you that outfit looked great on you." "I'll agree with you there. But there's something about Madlax's friend that seems so familiar. I can't put my finger on it." Elenore replied. "Actually she reminded me of you, well an older version of you. Perhaps she's a distant relative you didn't know of; after we're done here you could ask her, if she's still there of course." Vanessa said noticing that Elenore was spacing out which was quite unusual for her. "Hmmm...She might be. I honestly don't know many relatives I actually have outside from my immediate family. All mine are dead, my grandparents, my uncle, my mother and my father...well scratch that I never knew my father and no one ever talked about him. So I'll take your suggestion and ask her. It wouldn't hurt to ask." Elenore replied somewhat distracted. "So anyway Madlax, where did you meet Duvet?" Vanessa asked noticing that Elenore was "spacing out".

"She was a bodyguard I worked with a couple times in the past. She was also like a surrogate mom to me." Madlax answered nonchalantly.

"I thought you were in an orphanage, and then trained by that Three Speed person?" Vanessa said a bit confused.

"That's true, but while Three Speed was training me to be an agent she taught me the things that a girl "needs" to know plus she's the one who taught how to be ladylike after the job was done." Madlax replied with some fondness in her voice.

"That explains a lot, you seemed fond of her." Vanessa said.

"Well ya, she's nice for someone of her profession but she only stuck around long enough to teach me and then she had to leave. But during that time she did show me love and affection when I needed it and as said before we've worked a couple times together after that." Madlax replied nonchalantly as before.

"So it was a working relationship. Did she ever tell you her real name?" Elenore asked hoping Madlax could provide some answers.

"No, I only know her by her code name. Why do you ask?" Madlax asked somewhat surprised Elenore would ask that.

"Vanessa pointed out that she reminded her of me, I did notice some resemblance. I was wondering if she's a relative of mine that no one told me about." Elenore replied trying to stay in the now.

Madlax shrugged her shoulders and then pondered. "Hmm now that you mention it, she does look like you. Maybe she is. We'll go ask after we leave here and if she's gone I can always give her a call."

"Thanks." Elenore responded as they approached the entrance of the antiques building.

As soon as Madlax and the others walked off, Duvet looked at the camera and looked at the picture of Elenore. "You've grown so much. Your grandfather would be so proud of you sweetie." She said quietly to herself. "At least now I have an updated picture of you..." Duvet said holding another picture of a six year old girl in a pink ballet outfit complete with a pink tutu. A tear rolled down Duvet's cheek.

Meanwhile back at the Burton Mansion; Margaret opened her eyes and she was no longer in her room. She was back at that flower field that felt so familiar. It felt very warm and calming.

She thought she was alone till she felt a presence standing behind her and turned around.

She could see a woman. Someone she could not recognize at first, but looked at her tenderly as if she knew her. Who could she be? Margaret never entirely regained all her memories from before that incident, but after a while it finally hit her and she could remember this much: this person was her mother.

Margaret wanted to approach her and say something but she couldn't move and the words wouldn't come out. Margaret stood there looking in disbelief but she couldn't say a thing before her mother started talking: "Please Margaret listen! I don't have much time, and I know I shouldn't interfere with this, but I must warn you Margaret! The power that has come to you is more important than you might imagine. And the doors to your past haven't been completely closed yet. You'll encounter hardship once again, soon enough. You must be ready for it. You must be strong! I must go now, but I want you to know I've always been watching you... and I always will." The woman said before fading, as a sudden windstorm hit the place, and the once pleasant flower field turned dark and cold, forcing Margaret to cover her eyes at the unpleasant feeling.

Margaret opened her eyes suddenly, still shocked by the vision in her dream. She was awakened by the knocking on her door apparently. After her initial confusion usually following her waking up moments she concluded she must have fallen asleep while doing homework (nothing too uncommon for her). Before she could rationalize her dream properly she got up and went to open the door, doing her best effort not to look like someone who had just woken up. She opened the door to find Laetitia standing there. "We need to talk Margaret..." Laetitia said as she walked in.

"What do you want to talk about?" Margaret asked hoping the conversation would distract her.

"I have a plan to help Elenore with her nightmares."

Margaret was going to ask how Laetitia knew about Elenore's nightmares but she figured that Laetitia had her strange way of picking up on things that the rest couldn't. "Okay, what's the plan?"

Laetitia was about to tell when there was a knock on the door. Laetitia turned and gave the door a scowl. Margaret went to the door and found Limelda.

"Hi Limelda, can I help you?" Margaret asked a bit surprised to see Limelda at her bedroom door.

"Sorry to disturb you Miss Margaret, but I've found listening devices planted around the house and I need to check your room as well, with your permission of course. I'll ask your maid later to do the same with hers. "Limelda said standing in the doorway.

"Really?! Why would they want to do that for? But if you think its necessary go ahead, I'll ask Elenore when she gets home." Margaret replied still trying to act as she was not just waking up.

"I don't know why, but I doubt this is mere retaliation. Nobody goes through all this unless there's another reason behind it." Limelda said as she checked the room and after a few minutes through searching found one under the nightstand table where it wouldn't be spotted.

She yanked it from its hiding spot and showed to Margaret with some concern. "Whichever group is doing this has done a thorough job. I'm betting your maids room is bugged as well as the phones."

"I don't really understand why they are doing this, but I do wish they leave us alone." Margaret said sadly looking at the device in Limelda's hands as she was disabling it.

"We'll find out soon enough I guess. Oh by the way Miss Margaret, your little sister said some very odd things to me." Limelda said trying to pump Margaret for information while giving Laetitia a nasty sideways glance.

"What did she say *this* time?" Margaret asked Limelda with a quiet sigh, as this wasn't the first time Margaret had to hear about Laetitia's behavior.

Limelda repeated what Laetitia had said to her and Margaret was a little confused but answered.

"I don't know what she meant by all that, but I've never told her about your relationship with Carrossea in fact this is news to me as well." Limelda sighed knowing that this clueless girl was most likely telling the truth and decided not go any further with this line of questioning.

Margaret then turned to Laetitia and asked. "Did you say those things?"

"It's the truth, she deluding herself if she thinks she truly can have Madlax."

"You better watch what you say or someday someone might get offended." Limelda shot back.

"Who you? I wouldn't think there would be much that could offend you..." Laetitia fired back.

"Laetitia!" Margaret shouted.

"I'll have to wait for the others get home to finish checking. I'll be in the living room waiting for Madlax."

Limelda said suppressing the urge to strangle Laetitia.

"I'll have a talk with her." Margaret said apologetically.

Limelda shot Laetitia a nasty look as she exited the room. Laetitia closed the door behind her listening for Limelda's footsteps echoing off the hallway, when she sensed that she had gone far enough she looked at Margaret but before she could say anything.

Margaret felt really surprised and upset about the devices Limelda found in her room. If anything, she thought she'd be safe at her own home, but apparently she was not. For how long have those devices been there? And who planted them? How could they just break in unnoticed like that? These thoughts were all very revolting, but she felt relieved that Limelda found out about it and disabled them, at least. It bothered her most when Limelda brought up the name of Carrossea. "*What...Limelda and Carrossea? How can that be? He never mentioned anything about it... then again; I guess there are many things he never told me...*" Margaret admitted to herself, feeling rather saddened by that fact as well as Limelda's words, yet trying to organize her thoughts and hide her shock. Then she turned to Laetitia.

Elenore

"I don't know what started that fight but you egging her on is a bit uncalled for, plus is it really true? How is Limelda related to Carrossea? Do you know anything I don't know? Do you want to tell me about it?" Margaret asked with anxious curiosity, yet hoping it was all just a lie or one big misunderstanding.

"As I said before, she's fooling herself if she can truly have Madlax." Laetitia then told her of the link between her and Poupee and their conversations including the knowledge of the intimate relationship that Carrossea and Limelda had between them. She told in so many words (leaving out the fact she and Poupee were linked to Elenore) about Elenore's drinking. Plus she told of the visions of ravens and crows flying in a circular holding pattern forming a ring and of an unopened door of truth with a woman dressed in an old maids uniform standing sadly next to it holding a couple of books but both of the visions she couldn't really understand what they meant and that frustrated her. After she was done speaking she waited for Margaret to speak, her expression cryptic as usual.

The revelations about Carrossea and Limelda turned out to be truth, and this of course made Margaret feel a bit hurt, disappointed and pensive about the subject, wondering what exactly Carrossea felt about her. However, such thoughts didn't last too long once Laetitia started mentioning the other subjects. She couldn't understand Laetitia's vision about this door, but she shared her own dream visions she had been having lately ever since she had gotten in contact with the Torc, as well as bringing up the subject of the Torc and explaining it to Laetitia for the first time, hoping this information would contain important clues that could relate to it. Elenore's subject was what was troubling her most though.

"Why do you think is that happening to Elenore Laetitia? And how can I make things better? If I knew what to do, I'd do anything! But I just don't know..." Margaret concluded sadly, lowering her head, still feeling pretty guilty about Elenore's situation.

"Before we were interrupted I was going to tell about my plan."

Margaret brightened at Laetitia's words. "What is it?" She asked curiously.

"We bring Elenore to the sanctuary."

"Don't we need the three books for that and besides Elenore doesn't have the "Gift"."

"Normally yes, but you have the Torc and I feel it can help us. As for Elenore and the "Gift"; with the Torc's help we can bring Elenore's spiritual self to the sanctuary."

"Mmm...I guess we can try. It's better than doing nothing. But wait, shouldn't we ask Elenore first?"

"Really, do you think Elenore is going admit to abusing alcohol?"

"No, I guess not."

Margaret was pensive at first but she felt she had no other choice but she was worried what would happen to Laetitia but she just smiled and said not to worry. With that Margaret got on her knees, opened her shirt to expose the Torc and closed her eyes. Laetitia touched the Torc. At first it tingled as if to ward off but it knew the intent and soon both Margaret and Laetitia were in the shared mindscape. It was the nighttime park that Poupee and her shared with Elenore.

"Hello Margaret..." A young male voice said behind them.

"Hello Margaret..." A young male voice said behind them.

Margaret and Laetitia turned around to see Poupee standing. Margaret was in shock, it was the first time in years that she had seen him. Tears began to flow down Margaret's cheeks.

"I'm so sorry Poupee. I didn't mean to get you killed! Please forgive me." Margaret said between the tears.

Poupee silently walked up to Margaret and hugged her. "It's okay Margaret, I know you didn't mean to. I forgive you." He said in a forgiving tone.

"How did you get here Margaret?" Poupee asked once he thought about it.

"Laetitia brought me here but this doesn't look like the sanctuary."

"This isn't the sanctuary." Poupee responded a bit surprised and wondering what Laetitia had in mind.

"This is the shared mindscape Poupee and I use to talk to each other. I'll get Elenore and then all four of us can go to the sanctuary." Laetitia replied.

Elenore

Margaret felt that Laetitia was hiding something but she wasn't sure what. They soon found her sitting playing with the doll.

"If that's Elenore. Why is she a child? She is an adult." Margaret asked a bit confused.

"I don't know. It's all of her I could bring. Something is blocking me from bringing the rest of Elenore here." Laetitia said carefully as not to give away the fact that Elenore was here for awhile.

While they were approaching her they heard a voice that Margaret recognized as Elenore's but little older than the eight years old they were approaching singing a song that Margaret never heard before. "*That's an odd song. Then again I've never heard Elenore sing. I wonder why?*" Margaret thought to herself.

"Hello Elenore, please don't be frightened this is a friend." Laetitia said reassuringly.

Elenore nodded and smiled. "Hi Laetitia, who's she? She looks familiar." Margaret looked at the eight year old version of Elenore and smiled. "Hi Elenore, I'm Margaret." Elenore looked at her in surprise and then held up the doll. "Really? Her name is Margaret too." Elenore looked around and then turned back to Margaret. "Do you want to know a secret? If you promise not to tell anybody."

"I promise Elenore." Margaret agreed. Elenore smiled and motioned Margaret to bend down to her level. Then she whispered in her ear. "My mommy gave me this doll. But mommy and grandpa say I have to say that grandpa gave to me or the mean lady will take it away from me."

"Who's the mean lady?" Margaret asked wondering.

Elenore looked around for someone and relieved she held her index finger to her lips. "She might hear you, but since you have the same name as my doll I'll tell you. But you have to promise to never tell her I told you or she'll really spank me and she hurts."

"I promise, I'll never tell, even if she spanks me really, really hard." Margaret agreed wondering why Elenore would ask that.

"The Mistress is and she really, really, *really* hates my mommy."

Margaret was going to respond when they except Elenore found themselves in a park. It was bright noon and they could see Elenore's grandfather and someone that at first glance to be Elenore but it turned out not to be as they recognized the six year old Elenore sitting next to her. "That must be her mother. I've never met her, but she really looks like Elenore especially at that age." Margaret commented but Laetitia hushed her and told her to listen.

"Thanks father for bringing her here. I know you're taking a risk by being possibly being seen with me." Elenore's mother said with her head slightly bowed.

"You're my daughter and Elenore is yours. The Master doesn't mind me or Elenore seeing you but it's the Mistress. She's bitter still and Elenore is a constant reminder. If she found out she could bar you from seeing her completely." Elenore's grandfather said putting a gentle hand on her mother's shoulder.

"It's been six years and she's still bitter? If she doesn't want Elenore around why doesn't she let me take her away, she IS my daughter."

"For generations our family has served the Burton family and Elenore will have to take my place since you have been barred."

"What about Walter?"

Elenore's grandfather frowned. "He is not part of this family. I would like you to remember that..."

Even Margaret understood that veiled threat and she was saddened.

There was a long silence and then Elenore's mother spoke; "I'm sorry for all this except one thing; I never regretted having Elenore. She's the only good thing that came from all this. I'm sorry father for getting you into this mess." Elenore's mother said apologetically mixed with sorrow.

"Yes Meg you made a mistake but out of it you've given your mother and I a wonderful grandchild, I wish she was still around to see her. And I forgave you a long time ago." Meg's father said smiling.

"Thanks father, I won't keep you both much longer but can I give something to Elenore before you go?" Meg asked and her father nodded consent. Meg called over Elenore.

Elenore

"Yes mommy?" Elenore asked.

"I have a present for you, but must promise me you will never tell where you got from okay."

Elenore looked a little confused. "Okay mommy, but why?"

"Because sweetie, the Mistress might get mad and try to take it away from you. If anyone asks just say that your grandfather gave it to you. Okay sweetie?"

Elenore smiled. "Ok mommy, I promise." Elenore's eyes grew wide as her mother gave her a doll with a blue dress, brown yarn hair, black button eyes and red shoes.

As Elenore took the doll the scene changed back to the nighttime version of the park.

"Mommy?" Elenore asked in a panic.

"Mommy?"

"Have you seen my mommy?" She asked Margaret as tears started to fall down her cheeks.

"I'm sorry but I haven't seen your mother. But I can go look around for her if you want; you just stay right here in case she comes back."

"Really?! Ok I'll stay here." Elenore sniffed and then she beamed and replied.

Margaret, Laetitia and Poupee walked along the chain till Margaret thought Elenore couldn't hear.

"Why are we stopping?" Laetitia asked.

"That whole scene saddened and angered me. I'm sure you understood the threat John gave to Meg."

Laetitia nodded while Margaret bowed her head. "All I remember of him, that he was kind and loving.

What I saw there; disgusted me. I'm getting a bad feeling about this, should we go on Laetitia?"

"We have to, if we have any chance to help Elenore. That scene may've shown us the root of the problem. We just have to figure it out."

"What do you think Poupee?" Margaret asked still feeling a little weird.

"If I said let's turn back, would either of you listen?" Poupee said wondering if either Margaret or Laetitia were even listening.

"All right, but if it looks like we're hurting her, we get out. Understood?"

"Okay." Laetitia agreed.

Poupee sighed and mumbled to himself. "Like either you would listen to me..."

Laetitia and Margaret continued to travel down the chain. Poupee followed behind still wondering if what they doing was a good idea.

As they continued the nighttime park were replaced of scenes of Elenore committing various acts of suicide; hanging herself in her room, bleeding to death in the bathtub, walking in front of a bus, jumping into a speeding train. And those were between scenes of her beating to death various people; Carrossea Doone, Friday Monday, Maurice Lopez, a few girls Margaret didn't recognize and Margaret's own mother (granted Margaret didn't like it but understood where she was at and guessing what her mother did to Elenore). But the most gruesome acts were saved for a man that they had no idea who he was. The odd thing about the man was; he had no facial features to speak of at all.

Margaret suppressed the urge to scream as she grabbed Laetitia and Poupee and ran further down the chain. Along the way Margaret saw images of Elenore in a coffin, a morgue slab and in the field of flowers. Tears were flowing down her face. All along that song kept repeating itself.

At the field of flowers the ended and there they saw a door that looked like the door of truth.

Standing there near the door dressed in a black laced dress was the adult Elenore. As they approached they saw her cradling the same doll her mother gave her. She was singing that song as if it was a lullaby. Margaret slowly approached Elenore.

"Elenore..."

"Elenore?"

"Elenore are you okay?" Vanessa asked an unusually spaced out Elenore as they entered the building.

"Oh sorry Vanessa. I'm okay, maybe I'm tired or something."

"You do look a little out of it. You should lie down when we get home." Vanessa replied concerned.

The trio approached the front desk and asked about whom to talk about Celtic artifacts. They were given directions and they walked to an office. They knocked on the door and they got a response and they opened the door. The room was lined with bookshelves with a small table and sofa and a couple of plush chairs. Sitting on the chairs was an elderly woman dressed in simple blue dress looking at some notes.

"Doctor Tudor?" Vanessa asked the woman and she looked up from her notes and saw that they weren't her assistants.

"Yes I am. How can help you?" She said in a friendly tone.

"We were wondering if could tell us anything about the Torc of Rhiannon." Vanessa replied.

"Ah, I guess you heard the rumors as well. Even though it maybe turns out to be just a rumor it's nice to see people take interest in the past." Dr Tudor said looking over the trio and then nodding to herself.

"Rumors?" Vanessa asked wondering who else knew about the Torc.

"Why, the rumors about the Torc of Rhiannon surfacing in Nafrece of course. Did you know the last known appearance was over five hundred years ago. I do say you three seem to be quite nicer than others who've asked about of late. They all had the stink of greed, death or evil or all three about them, but you three seem well... different." Dr Tudor replied gesturing the three to take a seat while she prepared some tea.

"Thank you Doctor. That's very kind of you say that, we're not looking for the Torc per say. We're curious about the legend behind it and what makes it so special." Madlax said taking a seat acting like she was just curious.

"We know the legend of Queen Rhiannon herself but we were wondering why she would craft such a thing?" Vanessa asked understanding what Madlax was doing.

"Different...indeed...I don't know why? But that young woman looks like Meg." Doctor Tudor thought as she noticed Elenore. Then made some tea and offered the trio some which they accepted and then she sat back down and spoke.

"The answer is quite simple; she wanted a reminder of her ordeal and to help others going through their own. As for what makes it so special is the stories tell of the Torc being used to settle feuds between families, to see into the hearts of men and know their past and their desires. One story tells of the time it was used to repel an army of invaders by seeing in their hearts and convincing them to make peace among other things. But my guess some Druid was good at negotiating and they attributed it to the Torc."

"Wow, is the Torc that powerful!?" Elenore asked with some surprise.

Doctor Tudor smiled a little gleeful smile when you've impressed someone as expressed by Elenore's demeanor. "Those are just legends young lady. But even in myth and legend there's always a grain of truth behind them. I wrote about the Torc and other two legendary artifacts connected with it awhile back including the two other artifacts connected with Torc."

"Two others?" Elenore asked.

"Well yes; the Ring of Morrigan and the Bracelet of Brigid." Doctor Tudor replied.

"Would it be possible to buy a copy of your book Doctor Tudor?" Vanessa humbly asked.

Doctor Tudor smiled. "Well of course, I have a few copies lying around here somewhere here. Would like to buy one now?" She asked happily as she went to look around the room and came back with a very thick book (dictionary thick). The trio asked for a price and the doctor gave a price which they happily paid and threw in thirty dollars extra.

Elenore

"That's very generous of you; I'll even sign it for you since you've been very kind and polite. Who should I make this out to?" Doctor Tudor asked.

Vanessa pointed to Elenore and the doctor nodded pulling out a pen. "May I ask your name young lady?" Doctor Tudor asked.

"Of course Doctor Tudor, my name is Elenore Baker." Elenore replied nicely.

"Baker...? You wouldn't happen to be related to a Meg Baker by any chance?" Doctor Tudor asked.

Elenore's eyes almost grew wide as saucers. "I don't know. But that was my mother's name but she died ten years ago. Why do you ask Doctor?"

"There's an older art student who comes by here and looks at the pictures of Celtic artifacts and we chat. In fact she usually lingers around the art building next door. The one with the pillars... Quite a pleasant woman, if a bit quiet, just like you, are you sure you're not related..." Doctor Tudor said hoping that Elenore would get the hint.

"I just saw her outside drawing earlier. Please forgive me Doctor, but I must really go now. Thank you for your time." Elenore said hurriedly but politely as she rushed out the door and down the hall.

"I'm sorry about that Doctor; she's been going through some rough times lately." Vanessa said apologetically.

"I understand she seems to be a very nice young woman." The doctor said signing the book and handing it to Vanessa who was getting up.

"Yes she is, but we must be going ourselves. Thank you again for your time and the book." Vanessa said shaking the doctor's hand and then she and Madlax headed out of the office.

After they had left Doctor Tudor sat down in her chair with a Cheshire cat smile and sipped some tea.

"Well Meg, so that's your Elenore. You knew this would happen sooner or later. I just hope you can give her a good explanation..." She said to herself and took another sip of tea.

Meanwhile down the hall Madlax and Vanessa were hurriedly walking down the hall trying to catch up with Elenore. "Now we know why Enfant and the Soldats want it. If it has that kind of power, they'll be unstoppable." Madlax said with grave concern.

Vanessa said with equal concern "True, but right now I'm worried about Elenore."

"Elenore..." Margaret said trying to get her attention. Elenore stopped singing yet the singing continued as she looked up still cradling the doll.

"Hello Margaret. Please lower your voice, she's sleeping."

"Oh sorry, can I ask why you're cradling a doll?" Margaret asked quietly.

Elenore looked at Margaret like she was either crazy or joking. "A doll? Can't you see I'm holding my baby. I named her after you, you know." There in Elenore's arm was a small baby sound asleep.

Margaret tried to hold her shock and then she smiled a little nervously. "Your right, I was being silly."

"That's okay Margaret. You look like you have something to say, what is it?"

"Can't you see the door next to you?"

Elenore looked at the door.

As she ran down the sidewalk she could see Meg still at the pillar drawing.

"Why mother? Why did grandpa say you were dead? Where were you when I needed you?" She thought to herself.

Duvel looked up to see Elenore running towards her.

"Elenore..." Duvel said to herself.

"Elenore, how come you haven't opened the door." Margaret asked.

Elenore

"I don't know. I have my hands full with Margaret I guess."

"I can hold her if you want so you can open the door."

"Thank you Margaret." Elenore gently placed the baby in Margaret's arms. The baby began to cry and Margaret gently rocked. "Shhh...don't worry I'll give you back to your..."

"Mother!" Elenore yelled at Meg.

Meg put down her pad and rose to her feet. "Elenore..."

"Where have you been?" Elenore asked in a clearly hurt tone.

"Elenore please open the door." Margaret asked.

"Please, Elenore. You don't know the story." Meg responded trying calm Elenore down.

"All right Margaret." Elenore as she touched the door handle.

As soon she did Laetitia saw violent and terrible visions and then she yelled. "Don't open the door!" Across town, Carrossea stopped walking and shouted. - "Elenore don't open that door!" -Much to the surprise of passer-bys.

Margaret realized the mistake as she saw the visions as well. "Oh no! Elenore stop!!"

But it was too late Elenore had opened and she screamed.

"Elenore, are you all right?" Meg asked as Elenore stiffened, her eyes widening and her mouth gasping a scream.

The song had ceased but it was replaced by the sound of ripping and child's voice.

"Noooooooo! Don't make me go through that again! Please! "

The world flashed around Margaret and the others.

The last thing they heard before they were thrown out was; "Mommy..."

"Mommy..."

Elenore tried reach out to Meg but she began to fall. Meg rushed to catch her and she gently laid her on the ground as Madlax and Vanessa caught up.

"Elenore can you hear me?" Meg shouted.

Vanessa pulled out her cell phone and called nine one, one.

"She's in shock. C'mon stay with us Elenore!" Madlax said.

"Come on sweetie you can yell at me all you want, just stay with us..."

Back in Margaret's room.

"I'm sorry, I didn't know..."Laetitia sorrowfully talking to no one.

Margaret held in her hands against her face crying. "What have we done?"

Neither of them noticed Nakhil standing on the window sill looking at them with sadness and disappointment.

Madlax, Meg and Vanessa crouched around an unconscious Elenore as a small crowd was gathering around them.

In the distance sirens blared...

