

## Chapter 8. My buddy Limelda

Margaret saw the three of them leave and went back to the living room, casually joining Laetitia who was watching TV on the couch. Limelda was sitting there as well, ignoring the TV and looking rather frustrated. Margaret wanted to say something but found it rather difficult to approach her. Thankfully, Limelda took the initiative for her after a while.

“So, what do you have in mind for the day, “Miss Margaret”? It's not like we have to stay here waiting for them to return.” Limelda asked rather ironically, not trying to hide her boredom.

Laetitia shot Limelda a dirty look as she understood Limelda's meaning.

“Hmm... you can just call me Margaret.” She replied, not catching the hint of irony on Limelda's voice. “I was hoping I could call you by your first name as well!” she said with a smile.

“Considering that I now work for you, you may call me by that name. May I ask what your plans are?” Limelda said with a bit of frustration.

“I actually have no plans for the day; I'll probably just stay around and maybe do some homework.

Also... you really don't have to stay here with us Limelda. Please feel free to go outside and visit the city if you want!” She said in a kind reassuring tone.

Limelda chuckled at the young girl's carelessness regarding her own security, considering the dangerous people who attacked Madlax last night were there for her reason. “I am not leaving your side. It was Madlax's personal request.” She replied.

“Oh you really like Madlax, right? She told me a bit about how you two met, but I could never understand very well... what kind of relationship do you have with her?” Margaret asked interested, if rather casually, hoping to learn more about Limelda and Madlax indirectly.

“Well now, didn't you say you had some homework to do? Maybe you should get that out of your way as soon as possible, so you can enjoy the rest of the weekend with your friends without having to worry about it.” Limelda cunningly dodged the subject if a bit obviously though she figured she didn't need much subtlety when dealing with this clueless girl.

“Ah, you're right Limelda!” She agreed, “I do have a problem with procrastination at times.” She chuckled embarrassed. “Well, I'll let you be now. Please feel at home if you need anything, and if you want to ask something I'll be in my room. You be good and don't cause Limelda any trouble, okay Laetitia?” The younger girl nodded at her, if a bit embarrassed at the implications of such instructions, and Margaret left to do her homework. Leaving the two of them in the living room unaware of the verbal cat fight that was about to begin.

After Margaret went to her room, Limelda looked at Laetitia with that look one gives to annoying children. “What do you usually do Laetitia?” She asked hoping the kid would go and get out her hair as well.

Laetitia smiled with the look of a satisfied predator knowing her victim wasn't any match. Whipping out the verbal cat claws Laetitia spoke. “I rather ask you a few questions Limelda.” Limelda was a little shocked if not a little perturbed by the brazenness of this little girl.

“Actually, I'm surprised you didn't go look for Carrossea considering he's in Nafrece as well. But then again your preoccupation with Madlax...” Laetitia shot out not caring if Limelda knew or not that Carrossea was in Nafrece or not.

Limelda was actually shocked. How did this little girl know about Carrossea or her relation to him?

“Wha...Carros...How do you know about Mr. Doone!?” Limelda asked with some irritation mixed with curiosity.

Laetitia smiled enigmatically. "I know quite a lot actually. Some things I wished I didn't know but I know you and him shared some very intimate relations with each other while in Gazth-Sonika. Really unprofessional you know. Do you want me to give you an example...really I don't mind. Actually to be honest with you, I'm quite jealous." Laetitia shot Limelda a very adult look of envy and jealousy. "*Jealous!?* Why or how would this little girl know? Why or what would this child be jealous of?" Limelda thought as she restrained herself from strangling Laetitia. "How would you know about such things? What business does a child like you know about such things?" Limelda asked greatly unnerved by Laetitia.

"People aren't always what they seem be. Take Madlax for example; oh she's like you in some ways but she's different...you can't truly relate to her no more than Vanessa Rene can. You're both wasting your time and time is beginning to run short..." Laetitia answered cryptically. Limelda had a hard time keeping herself from wanting to rip out Laetitia's throat or snap her little neck.

"Look you...I'll...I'll think I'll check around the house if anyone asks." Limelda said unnerved, angry and spooked by Laetitia as she went and checked around the house. Limelda first checked outside and found a hiding spot with some listening equipment made for the outdoors and a couple of anti personnel grenades. She wrecked it and booby trapped the spot with the grenades. "Well that should give whoever's using that spot a nasty surprise." Limelda said with a wicked smile. From what she could see no one was watching the house at the moment or least not from close by. So she went back into the house and checked the central part of the house avoiding the bedroom area. She didn't want to be accused of rifling through people's belongings. Though she did find it odd that both the ways to the east and west wings of the house were locked and the doors were heavy duty and reinforced. She also found more than a few locked doors. She did however find some listening devices and disabled them. "*Whoever's watching the house did a thorough job. Wonder if it's Enfant or that other group. Doesn't matter, if either of them tries to hurt Madlax again...Madlax...what did that kid mean she's "different"?* That look she gave me that wasn't a normal look if anyone's different it's her." Limelda thought to herself as went back towards the living room.

Laetitia saw and tried to watch TV but her mind was preoccupied. Now that she was linked with Elenore both she and Poupee were getting the backlash of Elenore's psychic turmoil and her drinking. She felt herself at a loss on how to bring that up to Margaret without bringing up the link. Plus from what Poupee had told her any lie spoken to the wearer of the Torc would be revealed. She had to think of something and then it hit her; why not bring Elenore to the Sanctuary. With the power of the Torc and Margaret and her "Gifts" perhaps they could bend reality enough that Elenore could cope and heal her spiritually and mentally. Laetitia smiled at her plan but that smile went away as soon she heard Limelda come into the room.

Limelda returned to the living to still find Laetitia watching anime with some disinterest. "Oh you're back." Laetitia said without even looking at Limelda. "Did you find anything? I gather you did otherwise you've would've been back sooner. They think they're so clever but they're also having their strings pulled just like this false one here." Laetitia held up briefly the doll that Margaret had bought at the doll store for her and put it back at her side. "What do mean by that? And what do you know?" Limelda said a bit spooked again. "I could tell you, but you're blinded by the false hope you have. It all will become clear soon..." Laetitia said almost nonchalantly but just as cryptic as before. Limelda glared at Laetitia, she wouldn't...she couldn't do anything.

"I don't what game your playing little girl. I...ah forget it." Limelda stormed off and did another sweep of the house.

Laetitia smiled as she heard Limelda stomp off. Then she got off the couch and headed to Margaret's room.

Meanwhile Madlax dozed in the back seat as the trio drove to the garment district. Vanessa smiled as she saw Madlax dozing in the back and she saw a smile on Elenore's face. It reminded her of the time they went to the resort and Margaret was sound asleep in the back. "*Perhaps Elenore is thinking the same thing I'm thinking.*" She thought to herself.

"Wake up sleepyhead, were here." Vanessa teased Madlax. Madlax rubbed her eyes and said before a big yawn gave her away. "I wasn't sleeping I was just resting my eyes."

Elenore grinned from ear to ear as she muffled a chuckle.

Soon after; the trio wandered from shop to shop first buying shoes and accessories. Then they did some lingerie shopping. Madlax rolled into the shops like a little child in a delightful theme park for the first time. Madlax then walked into a plush and classy shop and instantly took fancy to a black short ruffled mini-skirt with Elenore nearby looking through the racks.

"Oh that's nice." Vanessa said glad Madlax picked out something that wasn't military or a cocktail dress.

"It's a little expensive" Madlax said in disappointment. "Don't worry about it." Vanessa smiled as she picked out a blouse and slacks set. "This one is casual just a shirt and pants, will you like that one?"

Vanessa asked while she helped Elenore get some more casual clothing for herself as well as helping Madlax do the same. Vanessa was having fun getting Elenore to try on stuff and watching Madlax enjoy herself as well.

When were ready to leave Vanessa and Madlax waited for Elenore to come out the dressing room.

Vanessa knocked on the door. "Elenore are you okay?"

"Yes, I'll be right out." Elenore answered and opened the door and came out. She was wearing a paisley white and purple peasant blouse with a cornflower blue ruffled skirt.

"You look great Elenore!" Vanessa exclaimed.

"Well, it's quite a change from what I usually see you in." Madlax added with a smile. Elenore blushed a bit while smiling."Thanks." She replied and Vanessa waved over the clerk and talked to her a bit and handed her a credit card.

"What was that all about Vanessa? I thought I was buying my own clothing." Elenore asked a bit baffled. Vanessa smiled. "You're wearing that out of the store and I'm sure Margaret would love to see you in it."

Mentioning Margaret stifled any protest Elenore would've made and she just nodded as the clerk came back with the card plus a receipt and bag and then removed the security tags off the blouse and skirt.

Then after they finished paying for what they had bought they left the store.

"So what was taking you so long in there?" Madlax asked when they outside.

"I took a long good look at my scars, especially the one on my back..."Elenore answered somewhat melancholy.

Both decided not to press the subject. "So where to now?" Madlax asked trying to change the subject.

"I figured we would try and see if the local university would have any information about the Torc and perhaps the other artifacts as well." Vanessa answered.

"Who, would and where do we ask? There are at least three universities plus a polytechnic college in this city." Elenore asked.

"The closest one to us is a five minute drive from here. We'll start there and then we'll go to the one Margaret goes to."

"Hopefully that university has an antiquities department." Elenore said trying to remember details.

## Elenore

"I don't see why not, it's the second largest in the city." Vanessa said a bit puzzled. She knew Elenore was very thorough in researching the universities in the city. Perhaps since Margaret wasn't going to this one she didn't feel the need to remember.

"Sounds like a plan to me." Madlax agreed trying to move her companions along. She noticed how relaxed Elenore and Vanessa were despite the danger they were all in. It was a bit unsettling but she noticed the same attitude in the people here. Then again this was her first real major exposure to Nafrecean culture and she was having some trouble adjusting.

"Oh sorry Madlax." Vanessa said after Madlax had gotten her attention.

Back at the Burton Mansion, Limelda went into the living ready to have another round with the "creepy little brat" but to her delight Laetitia had already gone off. To where, she didn't care at least she was out her hair. Limelda changed the channel and sat down on the couch and watched TV. Though she couldn't quite get what Laetitia said out her mind and the listening devices bothered her as well.

*"What have you gotten yourself into Madlax...? No scratch that. What did I get myself into?"* Limelda thought to herself.