

Chapter 22. Shards of the Heart

At the restaurant across from the hospital Margaret stared and occasionally twirled on her fork the pasta on her plate. It had been a rough morning. It didn't start that way. Though it was sad to see Nadie and Ellis go she was glad they were not involved, but Ellis' healing power could've come in handy. She tried not to dwell on that, other matters forced their way to her focus; the secret weapons' cache in her house was disturbing enough, the wounding of Susan illustrated the fact that the Soldats had no qualms about injuring or killing a child. Then there was Walter; he was the one who created the cache, he manipulated not only her mother, but her father, his father, Meg's ex boyfriend and Meg herself into doing what he wanted. Oh he said he did all those things just so he could hurt Elenore, but it didn't make sense until they remembered the vision. At first they didn't know why the Torc showed it but after Margaret saw into his heart she understood; on the day his mother died, part of him died as well and the rest of him did slowly over the years. He blamed himself for her death though no one else did. But that didn't explain why, his mother's journal didn't hold any clues other than that he was gay...but that didn't make sense either.

Soon after Walter left, Three-Speed and Val showed up and they relayed what had happened. Three-Speed was even more furious at Walter, apparently Walter had been doing other things behind everyone's back and he was finding dirt in some strange places. Susan being shot didn't improve his attitude at all.

They all went to the hospital to check on her and Laetitia. The only real bright spots this morning were that Laetitia could leave the hospital in a few days; Susan was okay but bed ridden for awhile and the rescinding of the restraining order on Meg.

So they all went to lunch across the street, except Meg and Elenore. She didn't know where they went, but she figured they went somewhere to talk privately.

Margaret ate a few bites of pasta...then her thoughts went back to Walter.

As she tried to piece it all together...things weren't making a whole lot of sense.

From what she knew and what she found out about John...he didn't seem anti gay. He knew his wife was gay...but loved her just the same. Margaret racked her brain for an answer as everyone else around her ate.

Meg told her that her father got mad for defending him because he was gay. She knew Meg wasn't lying, but she may've not been told the whole truth. Then she remembered what Walter had said...*"I knew when you got beaten up...I knew when you got raped..."* How would've he known that Elenore had been raped...unless...he... The thought hit Margaret like a shot and she dropped her fork onto the table.

"Margaret what's wrong?" Vanessa asked.

"I'll tell you after we eat. I have a hunch. Madlax could you either dial Meg's number or hand me your phone?" Margaret asked pulling out some money and placing it on the table.

She got up and went to Madlax. "I'm going to the bathroom..." She said to her and Madlax followed her. When they got in the bathroom Madlax asked Margaret. "What's going on and why do you want to call Duvie?"

"I have an idea where she and Elenore went...remember where Nadie and Ellis met Meg. It was the same graveyard where Elenore was raped."

"Yeah..." Madlax agreed trying to get Margaret to elaborate.

"The story the caretaker told them..."

"You think the caretaker did it?" Madlax asked.

"No, he's way too old and I really don't think he would do that...but somebody else would...someone with a grudge...a grudge against a little girl..."

Then the revelation dawned on Madlax as well. "Oh my God...how could he do that...she's his..."

"I know...please dial Madlax."

"Sure..." Madlax dialed the number and handed the phone to Margaret.

"What's up Madlax?" Meg asked in a distraught tone.

"It's Margaret."

"Anything wrong?" Meg answered as she was trying to hurry her up.

"Where are you two right now?" Margaret asked sympathically.

"We're near my father's grave...is this important?"

Margaret sadly frowned. "I know why you two are there..."

"Margaret please don't say anything right now..." Meg pleaded.

"I won't..." Margaret replied knowing that if she got it then everyone else did as well.

"Thank you...we'll be back at the hospital soon." Meg said before hanging up.

Margaret handed Madlax her phone and then the two walked out of the bathroom.

When they got back to the group, she saw Vanessa handling the bill with the money she left.

"I've lost my appetite, I'm going back to the hospital to check on Laetitia and wait for Elenore." Margaret said trying to keep her composure. Though what she had learned was making that very difficult.

Meg stood wretchedly in front of her parent's new gravestone. Beside her was the caretaker as he wrapped a comforting arm around Meg. Earlier Meg brought Elenore to see him to at least give some closure as he thought Elenore was murdered later on. It pleased the elderly caretaker to see her alive, then Meg asked him if he could remember any details of the man who had assaulted Elenore. Again she had her sketch pad, but all Louis could remember was he was short and really dirty blond hair and brown eyes. This raised Meg's suspicions as she knew Walter had dirty blond hair before he dyed it. Then Elenore and Meg stood staring at the gravestone as Louis left. A couple minutes later Louis came with a vanilla envelope. He explained he saw it on the windshield and thought it was important since it had Elenore's name on it. Meg carefully opened it fearing a booby trapped envelope. She emptied the contents on the ground and found a note and some pictures. Meg picked up the note and read it then showed it to Elenore.

Elenore,

If he had his way, you wouldn't have ever seen these.

You need to know the truth...look on the front seat.

We'll talk again before this is all over.

Be careful there are shadows watching....

K

The note was written in a woman's handwriting, but neither of them knew who "K" was. Elenore picked up the pictures and nearly dropped them in shock. They were her ultrasound photos and from the look of them it appeared that Elenore had twins! Elenore didn't know what to think, she barely remembered her Margaret but there was another child.

Meg remembered they took the file with them incase Walter tried to steal it. Neither of them were medical experts fortunately Louis' son was a part time coroner. Louis went to get his son who was at his house. When Elenore went to the car, she thought the note meant the file but the file was on the floor in the back seat. All there was; the picture of Susan on the front seat. Elenore was stunned, she recovered long enough to grab the picture and stagger back to her mother. All Elenore said before going to a bush and started to wretch was "This was on the front seat..." holding the picture of Susan in her shaking hand. Then it was Meg's turn to be in shock and then she looked at ultrasounds and Susan's picture and tried keep herself together. She didn't want to think it...but her own brother had done the unthinkable...but one question remained; how did Walter get a hold of Susan. She rushed to the car to

Third Moon Rising

grab the file just as Louis and his son came towards her. Meg had the wits to say that this was dropped on her doorstep in case she was asked how she got it. Louis' son looked through it and confirmed Meg's worse fears; her daughter had been drugged, she had twins, one with a fatal genetic defect caused by inbreeding (she gathered this was Margaret) and the other child had disappeared.

Louis' son urged Meg to have Susan and Elenore tested and bring the results to the police. Then she and Louis went back where Elenore had been trying to regain her composure. That was a couple of minutes ago then Margaret called. After she got Elenore to the car she drove off to the hospital. Elenore was despondent; it was bad enough she was raped but being raped by her own uncle and then having him pass the child off as some other woman's really pushed Elenore to her limit.

Meg speed dialed Three-Speed.

"Hello. What's up Meg?"

"Roy I need you to get to the hospital NOW!" Meg said trying to keep from crying.

"Actually I was going to call you; Madlax said something that I can't believe. Look I know he's been a total asshole. But I didn't think he would sink that far..."

"I need your clout to speed up a genetic test for both Susan and Elenore."

"Okay, I'll meet you there." Three-Speed said as he hung up.

Back at the hospital Margaret was talking with Nakhl. Apparently the news from Gazth-Sonika wasn't good; the area that Quanzitta was relocating their people was hit and the normally stoic Nakhl was deeply worried.

"I deeply apologize Margaret Burton, I pledged my help but I must go back."

Margaret sympathized and shared her concern with Nakhl. "I understand. I'm grateful and I thank you for what help you gave. Your people need you more than we do right now."

"Thank you for understanding Margaret Burton." Nakhl said before she left.

Ten minutes later Meg and Elenore showed up. Margaret knew Elenore was distressed as she tried to comfort her sister as they took a sample from Elenore.

Then she followed Elenore to outside Susan's room. Elenore was staring at Susan who was busy watching cartoons. Elenore stepped back so Susan couldn't see her.

Then she turned to Margaret. "What do I tell her Margaret?" Elenore asked dejectedly.

Margaret was sincerely at a loss on what could she tell Elenore that would help? She closed her eyes and asked the Torc. The Torc's answer was; *"To remember when she was a child, what would she want to hear."* Margaret thought the answer was frustratingly vague. "We have to wait till the tests get back, even though we know the truth we still need to have concrete proof. Just ask her about what she knows about her mother."

Elenore thought Margaret's answer over and she breathed a sigh of relief. "That makes sense Margaret. Margaret..."

"Yes Elenore?"

"I want to stay here right now. I know we need to look for Alice."

Margaret hugged Elenore. "We'll find Alice but right now this is a lot more important. Just leave finding Alice to us. Okay?"

"Thank you Margaret." Elenore said as she went into the room.

"Hello Susan." Elenore said trying to keep her calm.

"Hi."

"Do you know who I am?"

Susan thought for a bit and then shook her head.

"I'm your Aunt Meg's daughter." That answer caused Susan to smile.

"What's your name?" Susan asked innocently.

Elenore at first didn't know how to answer but she smiled and answered. "My name is Elenore."

Third Moon Rising

"Hi Elenore." Susan said with a smile.

"So how are you feeling?" Elenore asked.

"My leg doesn't hurt, but the nurse came in and put a needle in me and that hurt."

"Are you in pain now?"

"Nope."

"Well that's good sweetie. But I was asking was how are you feeling in here?" Elenore asked pointing to Susan's heart.

Susan looked down with sad and confused look on her face. "My other daddy died and my daddy..."

Susan began then she began to cry.

Elenore helped Susan blow her nose and wipe her tears. "What about your mommy? Where is she at?"

Elenore asked wondering if Walter had said anything to her.

Susan bowed her head then looked at Elenore and spoke in a conspiratorial voice. "If you promise not to tell my daddy I'll tell you."

Elenore got very close to Susan and in the same tone answered. "Okay, I promise."

Susan whispered in Elenore's ear. "I asked my daddy about my mommy and he told me never to ask about her ever again. Then I heard daddy talking to my other daddy calling my mommy some very bad words. He told me never to tell Aunt Meg, because daddy said I was his prize. I don't understand..."

"I can imagine what he said about me...he treated her like some sort of sick trophy." Elenore thought to herself. She wanted to tell Susan that her mother was right next to her. But she understood the psychological impact may be too much for her to handle right now so she held off for now.

"I don't think your mommy is anything like what your daddy said. I'm sure she loves you very much where ever she is." Elenore said hugging Susan in a motherly embrace.

The drive to Dr. Tudor was uncomfortably quiet; the last couple of hours had been one big emotional roller coaster. After getting Susan to the hospital and finding that she would be all right they heard about Walter's confession which didn't improve Vanessa's mood.

Then after Margaret and the others had shown up, they had to say goodbye to Nakhl. They tried to have a relaxing lunch but the sick revelation that crossed Margaret's mind crossed hers as well.

Vanessa felt helpless to help her best friend and that added to her frustration. She hoped along with Madlax and Limelda to find Walter or some Soldats, or even Enfant goons on their way.

"So who's this Tudor person?" Limelda asked breaking the silence.

"She's an expert I guess on Celtic artifacts or something." Madlax answered.

"What's the something? You saw the woman, you should know." Limelda asked.

"I don't know she had a lot of books. I guess old books." Madlax said trying to think of an answer.

The Bracelet echoed a slight chuckle and even Vanessa smiled.

"Huh, it's nice to see a smile on your face." Madlax said to Vanessa

"There hasn't been much to smile about lately. You know I've been meaning for us to have a talk but one thing after another got in the way."

"What do you want to talk about?" Madlax asked with Limelda frowning slightly.

"I meant all three of us Limelda."

"So what do you want to talk about?" Limelda asked her frown fading a bit.

"About us actually, bickering back and forth isn't helping."-Vanessa glanced at Madlax-"I really hate to force an answer out of you Madlax but..."

"Who do you prefer Madlax, me or Vanessa?" Limelda interjected.

"I don't know, why the fuss? You're both good friends; do I have to choose a best friend?" Madlax asked in a slightly sad naïve perplexed tone.

Third Moon Rising

Through the rear view mirror Limelda and Vanessa looked at each other a little confused and bemused. "Madlax, we're not talking about general friendship. We're talking about an intimate relationship; you know the kind where two people make love to each other." Vanessa replied hoping to clarify things to Madlax.

"Yes, which one of us Madlax. We need to know." Limelda said staring at the back of Madlax's head.

"The kind where two people make love!" Madlax exclaimed. "Ohhh..." Madlax said in moment's reflection.

"Shouldn't love be a sweeter thing?" Madlax asked with a degree of idealism as her cheeks blushed and she hugged herself.

"Ummm...what gave either of you the idea that I was interested in women?" Madlax asked through the rear view mirror she could see both Vanessa and Limelda giving a "what the fuck" look.

"Besides neither of you never asked me on a date." Madlax giggled slightly.

Vanessa slammed on the breaks in surprise almost causing an accident. Both women realized despite the time they spent with Madlax neither of them asked her on a date.

"You have a point Madlax, neither of us has." Vanessa said somewhat embarrassed.

"If that's the case, Madlax would you like to go on a date with me? Vanessa can bring Elenore. I'm sure she could use some cheering up."

"That sounds like fun! Vanessa what do you say?" Madlax joyfully asked.

"All right sounds like fun, but I don't think Elenore is in the mood for dating at the moment."

"We didn't mean today. I guess when we find all the artifacts and do whatever we have to do with them."

Bracelet gave a small chuckle. "Good point." Vanessa said as she pulled into the universities parking lot.

As Vanessa parked the car she was deep in thought and then she came to a realization; if Madlax and she were just friends' maybe she could pursue a serious relationship with Elenore. She also knew Elenore was understandably focused on her daughter and other issues at the moment. She also loved Madlax but all it seemed that she was only interested in friendship which was okay with her. She felt a slight disappointment but relieved at the same time. It was one less headache she had to deal with. They noticed that area was void of students guessings yesterdays shooting at another university cancelled any classes. They entered the antiquities department and found that Dr. Tudor had been missing since yesterday and her office ransacked.

"We can't seem to catch a break today." Madlax said when they left the building.

When they got to the parking lot they saw on the far edge; Alice staggering dragging what looked like the remains of a billhook. She looked disheveled and she had blood stains on her. Vanessa used the Bracelet to see if anyone else was in the area. Finding that no one was in the area Vanessa snapped her fingers and Alice was surrounded by rings of fire.

"Hey what the Hell?!" Alice said surprised after finding out the flames were very real indeed.

"Madlax, call Meg and tell her to bring Margaret and Elenore now!"

As Madlax called Vanessa and Limelda took a closer look at Alice. Along with the blood stains she her dress had bullet holes and tears where a knife cut it as well.

"You're not going anywhere Elenore." Vanessa said.

"Don't you call me that! My name is Alice you bitch!" Alice spat in anger.

As Vanessa approached Alice, Vanessa's appearance changed to what she looked like nine years ago.

"Okay, am I seeing things or what?" Limelda asked in disbelief as she watched Vanessa transform.

"Trust me you're not." Madlax replied as not as in much surprise as Limelda was.

Meanwhile as Meg drove Elenore and Margaret:

As Elenore sat in the front passengers side seat she clenched her fists in growing anger.

"Elenore what's wrong?" Meg asked noticing the sudden change in Elenore's mood.

Third Moon Rising

"Meg, we need to get Elenore there as quickly as possible!" Margaret said trying to keep calm as she felt the surge of anger pouring into Elenore.

"I'm going the speed limit and there's traffic Margaret. What's going on?" Meg said trying to keep her eyes on the road and on Elenore who looked like she was going to explode into full blown fit of rage.

"Alice is shunting a lot of her rage into Elenore, and I don't know how long I can keep her from going berserk!" Margaret reached over and wrapped her arms around Elenore and sent calming waves to her trying to keep Elenore calm.

"I don't appreciate you calling me that Elenore." Vanessa said in a disapproving tone.

"So fucking what, why should you care? And stop calling me that!" Alice spat back.

Vanessa walked to the edge of the flames and stopped. "That is your name isn't it? Your name is Elenore Baker not this Alice you're pretending to be."

Alice fumed at Vanessa.

"I know what happened. Why couldn't you tell me? Didn't you trust me enough?" Vanessa asked in a pleading tone.

"Why should care? You're just someone my grandpa hired to tutor Margaret."

"Despite what you think, I do care. You're just a broken hearted little girl who lost her grandfather."

Vanessa said trying to keep her calm.

"You don't know what happened. You weren't there. YOU WEREN'T THERE WHEN HE DIED RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME! YOU DIDN'T FEEL HIS HAND SLIP AWAY AND HIS BODY GROWING COLD! HE WAS ALL I HAD LEFT IN THIS WORLD!" Alice and Elenore screamed together. Elenore began pounding the dashboard in sadness and anger.

That revelation shocked Vanessa as all she knew was that Elenore's grandfather passed away while she was in school. She didn't know that Elenore had witnessed his death; she didn't even know where he died.

Margaret almost let go of Elenore in shock as all that she knew was that he had died. Part of her felt terrible; that she couldn't give her comfort and or support when Elenore truly needed it, as she was trapped in her own little world at the time.

"Oh my God...why didn't you tell me?" Meg said as she fought to keep the tears from starting as she learned this revelation.

"Margaret, just hang on!" She said as she sped up and started to race through the streets trying to avoid police detection.

"Why didn't you tell me this Elenore?"

"And what would've you done if you knew Vanessa? Huh?! Nothing I bet other than wondering how you going to get paid." Alice and Elenore asked in angry tone at the same time making Meg and Margaret wondering what Elenore was talking about.

Vanessa dejectedly looked at Alice knowing there wasn't much she could've done back then.

"Well...?" Alice questioned Vanessa.

"All I could've done; was taken you to the hospital and called the police. But you didn't trust me for that. I love you but you keep everything locked up and it's hard to get anything out of you. I know you don't want to burden anyone else with your problems but that's what friends are for."

"YOU'RE FULL OF SHIT! YOU DON'T REALLY WANT TO KNOW!? DO YOU? DO YOU?!" Alice yelled as she tried to chop at the flames but the billhook melted and she had to drop what was left.

"Yes I do Elenore!" Vanessa said as Meg pulled up and Elenore and Margaret got out of the car.

Elenore walked up to Vanessa and looked up at her. "Even the darkest part of me Vanessa? The one who has blood on her hands?"

"Yes Elenore, even the darkest part of you that covered in blood and sin." Vanessa replied as the Torc and the Bracelet glowed and they found themselves back in the throne room.

"You can't run here." Margaret said to Alice.

“So what...” Alice spat back.

“I want to know something; why did you beat Laetitia up? You could’ve killed her.”

“Could’ve? You mean she’s still alive? That miserable little know know-it-all!? I wanted to wipe that smug smile off her face. I almost did it to Carrossea but that chicken shit out ran me!”

Margaret was going to say something in anger but she realized what Alice was made of; the id and the malice that was deep inside of Elenore that they pulled out. Answering her in anger wouldn’t have helped so she decided to let flow over her.

“Thank you for answering. And truly sorry, all I wanted to do was help and I’ve made it more complicated than it really was.”

Alice fumed in rage at Margaret. “SORRY! You stupid moron! You couldn’t tie your own fucking shoes without my help! Because of you, that drunken bitch nearly beat me to death! –Alice noticed the shocked look on Margaret’s face and continued. – Oh that’s right. You never saw her beat me. You never saw her beat me when she was drunk or mad at my stupid mother, did you? No you didn’t. You just went along your merry own way while I suffered. She made my Christmas’, my birthdays horrible, any semblance of joy I had she willfully destroyed. I’m glad that cunt is dead. And...”

“And...what? Well go ahead. I mean you called me stupid and my mother a cunt. So what else Elenore? Go ahead, don’t let us stop you.”

“And if you didn’t go running off, I wouldn’t have gotten shot! I wouldn’t have died! I wish you weren’t my sister!” Alice yelled and as she yelled she aged and her clothing changed into the maid’s uniform that she once wore.

“Why don’t you want to be my sister?” Margaret asked noticing the change and probably the heart of “Alice” as well.

“I wanted to stay with you forever, that was my wish. But you turned out to be my sister and I didn’t want to be someone who fucks their own relatives! Why did you have to fuck father? I loved her...” Alice began in tears and then shouted at Meg and then she got on her knees and cried.

Margaret and all of them knew that Elenore’s memories were blocked with drugs. But with Alice outside of Elenore, she could remember without having the block.

“You knew who raped you, don’t you?” Margaret said.

“Yes I do. At first I was surprised and happy to see my Uncle Walter – Alice began calmly then quickly to angry tone. - Then he dragged me behind a bush and he beat me up then he raped me. He called me all sorts of names. I found the strength somewhere to get away. I wanted to kill him and I almost did last night but the bastard emptied his gun into me and he ran.”

“Well that explains why Walter’s clothes were ripped. That bastard...” Madlax said with masked fury at Walter.

Margaret had a hard time trying to think of what to say at first. “A shard of a broken heart...” She muttered.

“What?” Alice asked now a bit confused.

“You’re a shard of Elenore’s broken heart. She was honestly in love with me; she poured her soul out to me only to have events throw it back in her face as the truth was slowly revealed. Its okay Elenore, you don’t have to stay with me if you don’t want to. I want you to be happy and find someone to share that happiness with.” Margaret warmly said to Alice.

“That’s well and good Margaret but will she?” Alice asked pointing at Elenore.

Margaret turned to Elenore and asked. “Will you Elenore?”

“Yes I will Margaret.” Elenore said walking toward Margaret and Alice.

The flames disappeared as Elenore approached. Alice was ready for a fight but Elenore held out her hand like she did that day eight months ago.

In an apologetic tone she spoke “I’m sorry that you were locked away. But I’m ready to accept my truth...all of it.”

Third Moon Rising

"You do know if you do, you'll be admitting to being a killer." Alice said in a slightly mocking tone.

"Then she'll be in good company. Other than Laetitia everyone else in this family is a killer. That doesn't mean that she's not a kind person. She's one of the most loving people I know and glad that she's my sister. In a way I'm a bit sad. You're like what I once was and probably the only other person in existence who can truly relate to me." Madlax said warmly.

"Thanks Madlax, you dumb shit. Couldn't you have look at a watch or something? Or can you even tell time?" Alice said finally noticing Madlax.

Madlax laughed. "Sure I can." She replied taking what Alice said with a huge grain of salt.

Elenore looked at Madlax briefly and then turned back to Alice. "I know, but I need the memories if I'm to help stop Walter. I know you want that as well. Will you rejoin with me?" Elenore asked, again holding out her hand.

Alice pondered then spoke. "Only if you do me two more favors."

"All right what are they?"

"I want you stop Walter and Altena."

"I don't think that's going to be a problem and what is the other favor?"

"Sing."

"Sing?"

"Yes sing...sing right here, right now."

"What would you like me to sing?"

"You know the song. Canta per me."

"I will."

Elenore began and then Alice joined her both of their voices echoing across the throne room.

As Elenore and Alice sang; Alice placed her in Elenore's and the two of them glowed and transformed into a ball of light and the two voices merged into one.

Then she reappeared wearing a white dress with red shoes and black gloves as the door of truth appeared just as she finished singing. But Elenore's door of truth didn't resemble the one Margaret saw. On the doors themselves was the symbol of the Soldats; two maidens holding swords.

"It's up to you to open the door Elenore. You don't have to if you don't want to." Margaret said in a comforting tone though the door did intrigue her.

"I need to Margaret, not just for my sake but for Susan's as well." Elenore replied as she opened her door of truth.

As the memories flooded Elenore she knelt on the floor crying.

She remembered that day when she had first met Kirika in that room as Altena towered over them in glee.

"I finally understand Margaret...and I remember..." She said between tears.

"Understand what Elenore? And what do you remember?" Margaret asked.

"I finally understand why I couldn't pull the trigger in Gazth-Sonika. I didn't want to kill again...that's the real reason why I couldn't shoot the soldier or Friday Monday. I know who Kirika Yuumura is, I know who her partner is" Elenore answered as she got up from the floor. Then she briefly turned to Madlax and Limelda who was having a bit of trouble making sense of the situation. "I know who that purple hair girl is! Her name is Chloe, and she, Kirika and I had trained together to be the future Noir."

"You mean the assassin or assassins known as Noir?" Limelda asked as everything started to dawn on her.

"Yes I do. And it's assassins. Noir the ancient fate. With hands tied blackened with sin..." Elenore began then Madlax interrupted.

"Wait that tune. I've heard that tune before in my dream. How did it go?" Madlax tried to remember the tune but Elenore beat her to the punch with a bit of a smile on her face as she sang it.

Third Moon Rising

*Noir name of the ancient fate.
Two ladies with blackened hands.
Tied and made by hate.
To protect the peaceful lambs.*

*Sin within the man,
Sin within the love,
Sin within the sin,
Said the hermit to sinner
and sinner to the saint.*

*A dead sinner never returns,
But the sin always remains
And the love will never die
As the river of Soldat blood churns.*

*The maidens are the two hands
Painted blacker than black
Committing sins by the thousands
Killing with mercy across the lands*

“There, that’s the song in it’s entirety. I have no idea how you heard it in the first place Madlax.”

“I had this weird dream, maybe the Torc had something to do with. – Madlax said looking at Rhiannon sitting with happy look on her throne. -But it had these two women in it; one was a Japanese girl with a street hooker. Is the Japanese girl this Kirika you’re talking about?”

“Street hooker?” Elenore asked but really didn’t know that answer to that one. “I think so Madlax, I mean I don’t know what kind of dream you had.”

“Well it had Friday Monday in it and a lot of burning buildings with Alice singing that song in the background and then these two women showed up. I know I’ve seen them before now that I think of it. I saw them the first day I came into Nafrece. They were being chased. This Kirika and her hooker are pro’s.”

“I get the feeling that if Mireille ever heard you call her that, she honestly would try to kill you.” Elenore said finally getting what Madlax was talking about.

“Well she started it. She called me a bum, just because I accidently bumped into her that day.” Madlax said a bit defensively. “Oh that reminds me. I found this on one of those Soldats that day. Can you read it Elenore?” Madlax said pulling the black note book from her pocket and handing it to Elenore. Elenore read through it and saw the names. “Yes I can.”

“What does it say Elenore?” Meg asked wondering why Madlax didn’t mention it earlier but then remembered that it was Madlax that had it.

“There are orders for sanctioning Kirika and Mireille. Plus Carrossea and Douglas...” Elenore stopped as she read the name of the man who had hunted after Nadie and Ellis. From what she had read from the notebook Rosenberg was the head of Enfant in Europe. “Oh my God, we have to warn Nadie and Ellis!” Elenore said in horror.

“Of what Elenore?” Vanessa asked dreading the answer.

“Douglas Rosenberg is the head of Enfant in Europe! And Enfant and the Soldats destroyed the Coven. And didn’t Jodie say that Enfant was after her? I know why now. It’s not Enfant who’s after them it’s the head of Enfant who’s after them!”

Third Moon Rising

As Madlax, Margaret, Meg and Vanessa processed it they remembered what Nadie and Ellis had told them about Rosenberg.

“We’ll warn them once we get out of here.” Madlax said and then asked. “What about the other names in the book?”

“They have orders to merely watch Vanessa, Jodie, Margaret and myself.”

“That answers that mystery. So what’s on your mind Elenore?” Margaret asked noticing that Elenore wanted to ask her something.

“Yes I do have a question. Knowing what you know now, what do you think of me?”

Margaret smiled and shook her head. “I thought I said this before Elenore. I and everyone here don’t think any less of you and I love you Elenore.” Margaret said as she hugged Elenore.

“I love too Margaret as Elenore hugged Margaret in returned.

Everyone returned to the real world minus Alice.

Elenore and Margaret were still warmly hugging each other as they returned. Then they let go and Elenore pulled out her cell phone and looked for Jodie’s number which was thankfully still in memory. She dialed and waited for a response.

Meanwhile on a French highway Jodie’s cell phone rang. She feared it was Rosenberg calling then Nadie noticing the phone on the front seat picked it up and looked at the number. She saw it was Elenore that was calling and she answered much to Jodie’s horror.

“Hello Elenore?”

“Thank God, it’s you Nadie. Are you three okay?”

“Yeah, why you ask?” Nadie asked a bit confused.

“You know that man Rosenberg you told us about.”

“Yeah, what about him?”

“He’s the head of Enfant in Europe!”

“We know. Jodie filled us in on the way. I still can’t believe he’s alive. I shot the guy for cripes sake.”

“We picked up some information recently and we wanted to warn you.”

“Thanks for the info. We appreciate it.”

“Hi Elenore.” Ellis said from the back seat.

“Oh Ellis says hi.”

“Tell her I said hi.”

Jodie reached with an open hand wanting the phone. “Hold on Elenore, I think Jodie wants either say something or hang up. Well good bye just in case Jodie wants to hang up.” Nadie said handing the phone over to Jodie.

“Hello Miss Baker.”

“Hello Miss Hayward.”

“Could you not please call this number again? If Nadie or Ellis want to talk to you we’ll arrange a way where the call can’t be traced back to us. But thank you for the information.”

“I understand Miss Hayward. Just please say good bye to Nadie and Ellis for me.”

Jodie hung up the phone.

“She said goodbye and stay safe.” Jodie said as they drove on.

Elenore closed the phone as she heard the dial tone. “Let’s get back to the hospital. I still don’t know what to say to Susan. Because eventually she needs to know the truth. But before we leave, I want to sincerely apologize to all of you for everything Alice said.”

“You don’t have to. We all know that was a combination of the anger, sadness and malice plus a tiny bit of love that me and Laetitia ripped out of you. So what she said was well deserved and at least I’m

Third Moon Rising

taking it with a big grain of salt.” Margaret said with a happy smile knowing she finally corrected her mistake from earlier.

“Granted I wasn’t happy with her language but I knew where she came from as well. Plus I’m happy that I got the truth out of you Elenore. But you never told us where grandfather died at.”

“No I didn’t. Nor do I want to at this moment. When I’m ready I’ll tell but not right now.”

“I understand...and I won’t press the issue for now.” Vanessa said happy that the issue with Alice was resolved but at the same time troubled that Elenore still held something that troubled her, she made a mental note to go looking for the spirit of John Baker if he was in the mansion.

“It’s okay sweetie. Alice said what she needed to say. But I’m still worried about that trigger phrase.”

“It won’t affect me ever again.”

“How do you know that?” Madlax asked.

“When I merged back with Alice the trigger phrase and song were removed. In fact that song about Noir was the trigger phrase and the song was the melody from a Soldat pocket watch.”

“That’s good. It’s one less thing we need to worry about. By the way Elenore...”

“Yes mom.”

“You both sang beautifully. You really should sing more often.”

“I will, but right we need to get out of here before anyone notices we’re here.”

“Sounds like a plan to me. Let’s head out. I’m sure Susan is wondering where we went.” Meg said pulling out her car keys.

As they got into the cars Limelda whispered to Madlax. “Can you please explain what just happened?”

“I’ll tell you when I figure it all out myself. I’m not sure what exactly happened back there either.”

Madlax whispered back as they got in.

On the way back to the hospital Margaret was deep in thought and she was deepened saddened.

Though Alice she learned how badly her mother had abused Elenore. It did explain why John after her mother died tried to make Elenore’s life as happy as he could. Maybe because of his loyalty to the family he couldn’t stop her mother from doing all those things and wanted to make up for it. But the damage had been already been done. Also she had to rethink her relationship with Elenore as well just as Elenore was doing with her. Perhaps some time away from each other to think things might help she thought. But first there were the issues of the artifacts, Walter and the Soldats to contend with first. Margaret looked sadly at Meg as they drove on...

Alice’s retelling of what had happened only deepened her anger towards Walter. She recounted every lie he told her. She could imagine him laughing as he paraded Susan in front of her. Her own granddaughter and niece in one person and she could only imagine what Susan’s reaction to this would be when she was finally told the truth. It would have to be done by both Elenore and her.

“Elenore...” Meg said.

“Yes mom.”

“When it comes time to tell Susan the truth; I think both of us should. It might help her understand.”

“I’m still trying to think what to say to her.” Elenore replied with no joy in her voice.

“As they say we’ll cross that bridge when we get to it.” Meg said in the same tone.

Meanwhile back at the hospital;

The nurse that was checking on Susan was about go out of the room when another nurse came in and motioned the nurse over.

“What’s going on?” The nurse asked the second one.

“Did you hear?”

“Hear what?”

“That little girl over there.”

Third Moon Rising

“So what about her? She is the daughter of some big shot in Nafrece Intelligence.”

“Well I heard that they want to do a DNA test on her.”

“How come?”

“I heard that so called big shot raped his niece. You know that Baker woman who came in with her mother.”

“And?”

“They want to see if the mother is his niece.”

“They’re looking to see if it’s incest.”

“Yeah, poor kid. I hate to be the one who has to tell her.”

“Excuse me.” Susan said trying to get the attention of the nurses who were unaware that they were being over heard by Susan.

The nurse who had checked on Susan turned and trying to keep from looking horrified asked. “Is anything wrong?”

“What does incest mean?”

Both of the nurses looked at Susan in utter horror...

At the same time in another part of Nafrece. Kirika stood on top of a rooftop with tears both of sadness and joy on her face.

“You did it Elenore. You finally remembered. I’m sorry that the truth is so painful for you and your family. But I know you will endure, for us four are Noir...”

Kirika said right before a murder of ravens and crows engulfed her and flew off into the sunset.

