

Chapter 26. Interview with the phantom

Vanessa finished studying and closed the book. Some of the myths about the ring contradicted each other but there were some things that were at least in every myth and legend about the ring; the wielder could teleport, have superhuman invulnerability (she reasoned it was close to what Madlax had), seeing the dead. The last one she found out all of the artifacts had that ability in one form or another. She drained her glass and decided since she couldn't sleep, do what Margaret did; wander around the house until she found something or she got bored.

As she wandered around the central part of the house she noticed the downstairs didn't get used as much as upstairs did. At first she couldn't get in as the majority of doors were locked then she recalled what she had read about the Bracelet. If the legend was correct the Bracelet could unlock doors, so she went to the first locked door she saw. She placed her hand over the doorknob and briefly concentrated. With a satisfying click the door unlocked and she opened the door. Inside everything was covered with an over a decade's worth of dust. The only furniture were a wooden chair, an I.V. stand with a dried out I.V. bottle still hanging on it and an old bed.

Vanessa pondered for a moment then she said to herself. "It looks like Elenore hasn't been in here in years. I wonder why?" When she said those three words the bracelet glowed and she watched in full detail the exchange that Elenore and her grandfather had before he died right in front of her eyes. Vanessa looked upon the scene in sympathetic grief. "Why didn't you say anything about this Elenore? Why didn't you tell someone that your grandfather died right in front of you?" She asked wondering if the ghost of John Baker would appear.

"He could answer a few questions..." Vanessa said shaking her arm with the Bracelet on it seeing that would work.

"I'm glad Elenore isn't here to see this..." Vanessa began to say when she heard an older man's voice.

"So am I. The first time was hard on her..." The voice said and Vanessa spun around to see standing before her Elenore's grandfather.

He had a troubled look on his face.

Vanessa mustered all the courage she could and said. "Hello sir."

"Hello Vanessa, you're looking well." He said in a dignified but friendly tone.

"Well thank you sir, I need to ask you a few questions. If you don't mind?"

"Isn't that why you summoned me for?"

Vanessa was taken aback for a moment. She didn't realize that she actually did it. She regained her composure and answered.

"Yes sir. I do apologize if my summons was abrupt or forceful."

"Quite all right, I was hoping to speak with Margaret. But seeing that you're Elenore's best friend I can tell you." John replied in a polite but accepting tone.

"Do you know what happened to Elenore?"

"Yes, I do. There are a great many things that happened to her."

"I know some of them; Elenore does have that tendency to keep things to herself. I really hate to see her suffer like that. Anyways, I do apologize if this question sounds blunt; but why didn't you tell Elenore that Margaret was her sister?"

"I was told by my master to never tell her. I believe he wanted to tell her himself but never got the chance. I know it may have saved Elenore a bit grief, but I was too concerned about the honor of both the Burtons and my family to tell her. It was one of the few mistakes I made."

"Why didn't you tell her when she was on the other side?"

"We were going to but she was resurrected before we could."

Third Moon Rising

"I assume by "we" you mean her father and you. Speaking of parents; from what Margaret and I gathered you weren't homophobic. Then why bar Meg from seeing Elenore?"

John bowed his head in shame. "That was another mistake. I didn't take in account Meg's gullibility or Walter's treachery. I honestly thought Meg was condoning Walter's actions but only after I died I learned the truth. I left Elenore vulnerable without anyone to protect her and we both know the results..."

"What did Walter do?" Vanessa asked wondering in dreadfulness what Walter had done.

"Please Vanessa the less said about it the better. It's bad enough to see my son become insane but he did something that I do not want to ever utter. Please understand this."

Vanessa didn't want to press the issue; what she imagined probably paled in comparison.

"I understand. To be honest I really don't want to know what he did. Knowing what he did to Elenore was bad enough."

"Yes I know, could you remind her to either bury or spread our great granddaughter's ashes so she can join us."

"I will in the morning. Is there anything you want me to pass to Elenore or Meg?"

"Yes please. Tell Meg that I'm sorry for what happened and to Elenore that because of my foolishness I left her alone. For that I am sorry as well. And last thing..."

"Yes?"

"Tell them both we love them." John said with a smile before he faded into the ether.

Vanessa stared at the spot where John had stood in silence. She got the answer Margaret and she wanted in a way but she didn't want to contemplate what Walter did. But it did explain why Meg was barred from seeing Elenore; he was trying to protect from his granddaughter from his perspective his "perverted" children.

"I really hate to be the one to relay this to Meg, she's furious at Walter as is. This might make her go hunt him down herself. Elenore will want to know too and she's got a lot on her plate.- Vanessa turned her head to look at the bed.- I can imagine what else she's hiding." She said with a frown as she left the room. She noticed Limelda leaning against the wall down the hall and she went to her ready for yet another verbal sparring match.

When she got to Limelda, there was a hint of a frown on her face.

"I guess you heard the conversation."

"You know, you're really easy to sneak up behind. I saw that scene as well. I can actually relate to what she went through."

"How so may I ask?" Vanessa asked in a compassionate tone.

"I saw my own mother killed by the Galza resistance during the civil war..."

"So that's why you joined the kingdom army; revenge..." Vanessa thought to herself.

"I'm sorry to hear that..."

"I'm beginning to understand why your friend doesn't say anything; it's too damn painful...I'm surprised she's lasted this long without killing herself."

Vanessa was about to snap at Limelda when she realized she had a good point and a terrible realization about Elenore's actions in Gazth-Sonika; they were an unconscious attempted suicide. She knew she might die and she didn't care. On the surface it appeared to be Elenore's desire to find Margaret and her subconscious revulsion against killing. But hearing what Margaret saw in Elenore's mind made it much clearer.

"In a way she did in Gazth-Sonika. Ever heard of suicide by cop?"

"Yeah, what about it?"

"She could've taken those soldier's weapons away with her even if she didn't want to kill."

"What you're saying is that she let herself get shot. I get the impression that she's the type of person who wouldn't let that happen."

Third Moon Rising

“On a conscious level, I don’t think she would actively kill herself. But I do wonder if she had an unconscious death wish.”

“Only she can answer that and do you really think she’s to going give you that answer even though you’re her best friend? I doubt she’s told Margaret about it and she’s her sister.”

“I doubt that as well. Getting back to what you heard...”

“I gather that sick bastard did something that horrified his father.”

“I’m sure he did but I really don’t want to know.”

“Look, you might have to. He raped his own niece when she was twelve who knows what he did to some other kid.”

“That thought crossed my mind as well but I haven’t found any evidence and we’ve done a full sweep of the mansion. It’s all speculation anyway. I’m asking you not to mention this to Elenore please.”

“I wasn’t going to.”

“Thank you.”

Limelda began to turn and started to walk away. “I have to make another sweep...”

“By the way Limelda.”

“Yes? What is it?”

“I meant what I said when you mentioned your mother.”

“Thanks and sorry about yours as well.” Limelda said as she walked off.

“You’re welcome and thank you.” Vanessa said watching Limelda walk off.

Then she went to bed wondering what the morning would bring.

Margaret found herself fully clothed and in the field of flowers. She wondered if the Torc or the “Gift” was doing this. She walked a bit when she saw a familiar pair standing nearby.

She cautiously approached the pair. When she got to them she said trying to restrain her fear. “Hello Mother and Father.”

Her mother smiled at her. Margaret was looking at her father with a bit of a guilty look.

“You look like you have something to say Margaret. Go ahead say it.” Her father said in a patient tone.

“I’m sorry father I shot you but I didn’t want to die.” Margaret said barely holding back the tears.

“I know Margaret. I would’ve done the same thing in your place. We forgive you Margaret.”

“Thank you Father. But I do have a question. It’s been bothering me since we got back from Gazth-Sonika.”

“Yes?”

“Did you ever want me? I know about your plan to adopt Elenore even though she’s my sister.”

“Yes I did want you, though your birth did complicate certain things but I do love you.”

“Thank you Father. But can I ask why you didn’t you tell Elenore when she was here?”

“I was going to but she was too busy yelling at your mother before she got resurrected.”

“I’m not surprised considering what I know now. - Margaret turned to her mother. - How could you do those things? I understand you were angry at her mother but why take it out on her?”

“At the time I was angry and hurt. Your sister was a reminder of your father’s infidelity. Yes I know what I did was wrong and I played right into Walter’s hands. Elenore gave me an earful when she was here.”

Margaret tilted her head in slight puzzlement. “You didn’t tell her about Walter?”

“She didn’t give me the chance. After she was done saying what she needed to say, all I could say was I was sorry. She seemed to accept that and then she left.”

“To be honest Mother, I don’t know if she forgave you. I know she forgave her mother and she seemed a bit angry at you.”

“I understand. I’m glad she reunited with Meg. Margaret could you do me a favor?”

“Yes Mother.”

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“Could you please tell Meg that I’m sorry? I’m not asking for forgiveness...”

“I will, I think she would forgive you more than him....” Margaret said trailing off.

“You know that as well. I know she’s your sister but don’t go poking your nose where she doesn’t want you to go.” Richard Burton said in somber tone.

“I know I learned that the hard way. I know when she’s ready to talk about it I’ll be there.” Margaret said with a smile. Then she felt an unseen tug on her.

“Oops, looks like I have to go. Good bye Mother and Father.”

“Good bye Margaret, and remember we will be watching over you always.” Anna said as Margaret began to fade.

“Who’s that man in your bed young lady?” Richard asked with a little fatherly concern.

“Got to go, bye!” Margaret said as she disappeared.

Margaret woke up and turned her head to see Carrossea sleeping soundly. She quietly giggled as she said to herself. “That was close...” Then she went back to sleep with a smile on her face.