

Chapter 18. Maneuvers

Jodie went to the address that Nadie provided. She parked the car near the gate and intrepidly started walking towards it. As she approached the gate she could see that it had been torn off its hinges. There were small craters on either side of the gate and blood stains on the ground. Chalk outlines marked where corpses had recently laid. From the look of it, she just missed the police. She approached the doors; she could see that they were replaced as there were bullet holes on either side of the doorway. She was honestly a bit nervous, as she worried about her friends' safety as well as her own. She pulled out her ID and passport and kept them at the ready.

She rang the bell wondering if she was at the right place at all. She heard the door open a crack and she heard a woman's voice. "I'm sorry we're not issuing a statement until the police do." Then the door was beginning to close.

"Wait, I was asked to come here!" Jodie said loudly.

The door stopped. "Who are you and who asked you to come?"

Jodie showed her ID and passport at the opening. "My name is Jodie Hayward and I was asked to come here by Margaret Burton and her sister Elenore."

The door opened wider and a hand reached out and grabbed and pulled her inside. "Get inside!"

As she was pulled in the door behind was shut. She saw who pulled her in; an Asian woman just as tall as her with purple hair. The woman let go after she was inside.

"As you can see we had an incident earlier today."

"I see, I was told my friends would be here."

"They're on their way here. How do you think I knew who you were?"

"May I ask who you are?"

"I'm Limelda Jorg, that's all you need to know." Limelda said as she led her to the living room. Standing there was a man she hadn't seen in a long while.

"Nice to see you Jodie. Welcome to Nafrece." Walter greeted Jodie.

"Hello Walter, it's been awhile..." Jodie replied a bit relieved.

A tall woman with green eyes and black hair entered the room. "I'm all set Walter. Oh who is this?" The woman asked.

"Vanessa Rene, this is Jodie Hayward. Jodie, this is Vanessa. Sorry we can't stay to chat but we've got to go."

Walter said, then turning to Vanessa. "Did you leave a note for Elenore and the others?"

Vanessa nodded. "Yes, I left a note for Elenore."

"All righty, let's go. See ya later Jodie." Walter said as he and Vanessa headed out. Vanessa gave a quick wave before she left.

Meanwhile back at the hospital parking lot.

"How are we going to get back to the mansion? Miss Baker can't fit us all in her car and if she gets caught she might go to jail. I don't want that. Taxi's are out of the question with Enfant and the Soldats running around..." Margaret asked with some legitimate concern.

"I know Madlax can drive. Nadie and Ellis can either of you drive?" Elenore interjected.

"Yeah, I see where you're going with this." Nadie replied.

Madlax noticed Meg trying her best to hide a Cheshire Cat grin. "What's up Duvie? You've got that look."

"Well I have the transport problem solved and if he's bringing what I think he's bringing. I can at least drive up to the front gate without getting snagged."

"If you can drive up to the front gate, you can come into the mansion. I'm sure Elenore and Madlax would like that a lot." Margaret chimed in with a smile.

Third Moon Rising

"That's very nice of you Margaret but even if I went in. Somebody is bound to notice my car." Meg replied trying to hide the trace of anxiety in her voice.

"We can park it where it won't be seen from the street. And perhaps Madlax could take a look on the street before you leave..." Elenore countered with Margaret nodding in agreement.

"I'm not going to win here am I?" Meg sighed.

"Surrender is your best option." Elenore said with a grin of her own.

"Nope..." Margaret added.

"Don't think so Duvie." Madlax chimed in.

"Absolutely not." Ellis added with a deadpan style.

"Et tu Ellis?" Meg said in mock indignity. Then she noticed a blue Two thousand and ten Ford Taurus coming towards them.

"About time he showed up." Meg said impatiently.

The Taurus pulled into a nearby space and Meg walked over to it. Meg talked to the driver and then waved the rest of the group over.

Madlax stopped dead in her tracks.

"What's wrong?" Elenore asked wondering why Madlax had stopped.

"Three Speed?!" Madlax quietly said to herself as she began to walk to the car.

"Hello Madlax. I see you made your way to Nafrece." Not noticing that Meg had gotten in the back of the car.

"I haven't heard from you in months. I thought you ran to the Bahamas' or something. What happened?" Madlax asked the pain evident in her voice.

"We can talk about this later Madlax. Right now I believe you're in the middle of an assignment." Three Speed said trying to avoid the subject.

Madlax frowned as she finally noticed Meg getting out of the car. She noticed that she had put on a short dirty blond wig and blue contacts lenses even though she still had her glasses on.

"That's a new look for you Duvie." Madlax commented.

"It's called a "disguise so I won't get busted for trespassing" disguise." Meg commented back.

Three Speed handed Meg a note. "What's this?" She asked.

"Walt wanted me to give that to you." Three Speed replied.

As Elenore and others approached they noticed Madlax and Meg with her disguise talking to a Caucasian man in his forties with angular features and graying brown hair.

Margaret noticed Madlax wasn't too happy but she got the feeling that it was personal by the way she was looking at the man in the car.

"Nice disguise mom, do you think it would work?" Elenore commented.

"It had better. Madlax, you and Margaret go with Three Speed. I'll take everyone else in my car." Meg said starting toward her car.

"Mom, is that wise letting Margaret and Madlax go with that man?" Elenore asked with no little concern.

"They're fine. Madlax is just a little understandably upset with Three Speed. The ass doesn't realize how much of a father figure he is to her. And since from what I understand the Torc can detect lies so at least she can get the truth out of him." Meg replied with a little frustration in her voice.

"Just like you're a mother figure for her..." Elenore said with a little envy.

Meg sadly looked at Elenore.

"I'm sorry mom...I didn't mean to have it come out that way." Meg gently patted Elenore on the shoulder. "It's okay."

"What does the note say?" Elenore asked trying to change the subject.

Third Moon Rising

Meg looked at the note.

M.P.

Meet me at mom's table at 8.

W.

"That's a strange note. Who's M.P.?" Elenore commented curious about the note.

"Your uncle's nickname for me. It's short for Meggy Peggy. And from what I gathered he wants me to meet him at mom's table in the east wing."

"You mean the east wing kitchen? There's a table there with four chairs. I remember Grandpa saying something about one of the chairs." Elenore asked trying to muffle a giggle over her mother's nickname.

"Oh? What did he say?"

"That no one was ever to sit in that chair. I thought it was broken or something. I've dusted it but I've never sat on it but I was tempted to a few times."

Meg smiled. "I know why, because that was your Grandma's chair..." Unlocking the car and getting in.

"Why does Uncle Walter want to meet you there?" Elenore said getting in the same time as Nadie and Ellis.

"It's where we used to talk about things when we both lived at the mansion..." Meg said as she started the car and pulled out following Three Speed...

Mireille and Kirika barely made it in time, just enough to scout the surroundings a bit and find an escape route or two. The street was paved with cobblestones and the street lights hadn't even come on yet, it was still light out, heading to twilight. They saw a green El Dorado sedan parked near a short (compared to Mireille) well dressed man in his thirties sipping from a Styrofoam cup. The whole street appeared to be typical upper middle class/lower upper class. They got the feeling that this area was chosen because that any disturbance would be noticed almost immediately.

"Cover me," saying that to Kirika, Mireille slowly approached the man, keeping her hands where he could see them. "Hello, sir. Could you help me find the Bagpiper Street? I'm a bit lost here..." That was the pass phrase they agreed upon.

The man looked at Mireille calmly and said "Of course ma'am, it's two blocks north of Duvet Street." This was the return pass phrase they agreed on.

"Right," Mireille motioned for Kirika to come closer. "So. You clean? No tails, no snipers on the roof?"

"I'm clean. I was asked to bring you, so I made sure there was nothing of the sort. Can we go? I'd rather not stay out here too long." The man said pointing with his hand to the nearby parked car.

"Alright, let's go," Mireille cast a last look around and moved towards the car.

The man walked over to the car and opened the driver's side and got in. He waited till Mireille and Kirika got in and then started the car and drove around making sure of no tails and then when they got to a squat brick building he stopped the car in front of it.

"Here we are ladies, if you'd follow me please." He said getting out of the car.

He waited for them to get out and he set the alarm and gestured to follow him.

He led them to a side door and pressed the buzzer on the side and spoke;

"Saruman! Saruman come out!"

"Who is it? What do you wish?" They heard from the speaker.

The man pressed the reply button and spoke. "Tell Saruman I, Gandalf the White, wish to speak with him."

Mireille always knew IT guys were geeks; but who was she to talk reading Dostoevsky for a pastime herself?

The door buzzed and the man opened it and motioned to the pair to go inside and then he went in and closed the door.

He led them to a lounge where in leather swivel chair sat a tall woman with black hair and green eyes. She looked at Mireille and Kirika intently. Mireille tried to hide her obvious surprise of Badgis actually being a woman. "*Clever, no one would suspect he was actually a she.*" Mireille thought to herself.

"Are these them?" The woman asked.

"Yes they are. Ladies may I introduce Badgis." The man said gesturing to Badgis.

"Is there a problem?" Badgis asked.

"I wouldn't have figured that you were actually a woman." Mireille replied.

"I have my reasons. But you didn't wish to see me to ask about my gender did you? I didn't quite get your names?" Badgis replied and questioned Mireille.

"No, we came here looking for information." Mireille replied and then she continued. "Bouquet, Mireille Bouquet," She introduced herself. "And this is my partner, Kirika Yuumura." Mireille said gesturing to Kirika.

"May I sit down?" She asked Badgis. "I'm more comfortable with talking on the same eye level..."

"Of course, Miss Bouquet. Now what would you like for me to find for you?" Badgis said gesturing to another swivel leather chair.

Mireille sat down where Badgis pointed and looked questioningly at her and the man.

"I do not mean to intrude, but... is your friend here trustworthy enough? I'm afraid, our business here is not quite... on this side of the law."

"You can trust him; he's here for my benefit." Badgis calmly replied.

"*You mean protection...*" Mireille thought glancing at the man and noticing that he had a budge under his jacket.

"All right, I understand. Shall we get to business? I want to know why the Soldats are after us. No, wait, I know that much and you are better off not looking into it. I just wanna know who gave the order. We already had a run-in with them some time ago, but we called a ceasefire. Now that they are after us again I want to know who's behind it and where we can find him."

"The Soldats...hmmm...you do know they're at war with Enfant. So it will be a little more difficult to pull off but it is doable. But I get the feeling you want more than that, am I correct?" Badgis asked.

"I'm well aware of that but I just need a name and an address." Mireille shrugged. "But even the name should do nicely. How you get them is up to you. Now, about the payment..." Mireille started when Badgis held up her hand.

"As I said before, this will be more difficult. I have to dodge both Enfant and the Soldats. So I'm going to have to ask for a favor as they say."

Mireille sat staring at Badgis. Mireille would've liked to pay in cash; but Badgis did make an excellent point and they needed the information. "All right, name your favor." Mireille said with a little frustration in her voice.

Badgis gestured the man to a small pile of papers on nearby table which he went to and picked up and handed them to her.

"This is the layout for St. Agnes Hospital. As you can see marked on the map there's a route to the secure files room."

"I'm sorry, we're not burglars and how do you expect us to go into a hospital to most likely steal a file or two?"

"I never asked you to break in for you see at nine oh- four tonight the power will go out as will be the security system. All I'm asking is that you go in, grab the file and make it to the predetermined contact point in twenty minutes or less. If you need a lock pick gun I can provide you with one if the file is in a locked drawer."

"What file are we looking for? And that's provided we agree."

"Fair enough, it's a medical file of a woman named Elenore Baker." Kirika's ears pricked when she heard that name.

Third Moon Rising

"I don't know..." Mireille began but she was interrupted by Kirika.

"We'll do it. Just give us the gun and the contact point for exchange for the information."

Mireille swore silently to herself. "Kirika..."

"If you won't do it I will." Kirika said in a totally surprising defying tone.

"If it wasn't bad enough that she's obsessed with Chloe, now she's obsessing over this Elenore woman. But I do have to admit now I'm just as curious about this woman. I think I'll have a look at that file as well." Mireille thought to herself before she replied to Kirika. "I didn't say we wouldn't. Just give the contact point and we'll be on our way." Mireille said to Kirika then to Badgis.

"Excellent. Would you like a hard copy or on flash drive?" Badgis asked.

"A hard copy will do. Now let's discuss this contact point." Mireille replied and for the next five minutes discussed about the meeting spot.

"Kirika, I'm done negotiating." Mireille said getting up and then the man handed her a lock pick gun and the map.

"Then I guess it's settled. Meet you at the rendezvous point." Badgis said as they were leaving.

"I suppose so...Good day." Mireille said hiding the displeasure she felt.

The man escorted them to the door and let them out. After he led Mireille and Kirika out, he returned to Badgis. The pair sat for ten minutes till a light flickered on and off. Badgis had risen from the chair and the man smiled and hugged Badgis.

"You were great Vanessa!" The man said cheerfully.

"Thank you Walter. I have to admit those two give me the creeps." Vanessa replied.

"Don't worry about it." Walter said nonchalantly.

"What if they spot me somewhere else, like the mansion?" Vanessa asked with anxiety filling her voice.

"Just stay away from the windows or anyplace they could see you. Now let's go see how the real Badgis is doing." Walter said with a wink.

Then the pair went down another hall into another room where the real Badgis was looking over data. Nearby was a container of sesame chicken with a fork stuck in it.

"I was about to get you two. I found what you're both looking for..."

"And...?" Walter asked.

"I think you two should take a good look at this..." Badgis said and as Walter and Vanessa looked over the data their eyes widened in shock.

"We really need to get that file as soon as possible." Vanessa said with great urgency.

"Agreed, that's why I have a contingency plan in place in case those two screw it up." Walter replied.

"What will we do about...?"

"Don't worry, I'm heading there now. You stay here in case those two decide to double back. I'll bring back some tacos for the both you." Walter said reassuringly as he began to leave.

After parking Meg's car where it couldn't be seen and to allow her easy escape if she needed it. The group finally made it to the mansion. Madlax went in first.

"Limelda we're home!" Madlax shouted.

"About time, I was wondering what had happened. Walter told me about the shooting at the university. I'm glad you're all right but I knew you make it out okay." Limelda replied glad that Madlax finally came back.

"Thanks. Margaret would like to talk to you for a moment." Madlax said.

"Who are they?" Limelda asked seeing Nadie and Ellis come in.

"Oh, that's Nadie and Ellis. By the way did their friend get here?"

"Blue eyed woman, yeah. She's in the living room."

"Thanks, where is the living room?" Nadie asked noticing the size of the mansion.

"Upstairs to the right, can't miss it. I'll come up and make some tea." Elenore replied as she saw them go upstairs. In the corner of her eye she noticed Margaret talking to Three Speed and her mother.

"Who's Three Speed and Margaret talking to?" Limelda asked Madlax.

"Oh, that's Duvet." Madlax answered and Limelda's eyes widened in surprise.

Limelda looked at Elenore then at Duvet. "Oh yeah she's her kid all right."

Margaret approached Madlax and Limelda as Elenore, Duvet and Three Speed went up the stairs.

"Sorry about that, Miss Jorg. I had to straighten something out. I want to thank you personally for guarding our home and risking your life in doing so. I know full well that you did it for Madlax. That's fine. We can discuss fair compensation another time. I've had a long day and I want dinner and some tea." Margaret said at first a thankful tone then growing more serious that Limelda paid attention.

"Thank you Miss Burton. I'm sure we can work something out." Limelda replied a bit surprised.

"Now if you excuse me, I'm going to find out what other headaches I've come home to." Margaret said in a very firm "don't give me any shit" tone as she went up the stairs leaving Limelda standing there quite speechless.

At the top of the stairs she saw Elenore standing there. Margaret knew that she had been standing there listening and being her usual protective self. She smiled but then it disappeared when Elenore blurred and she was still standing there. Beside her there were a couple of suitcases and tears running down her cheeks. "I'm sorry I don't deserve to be here or even come back. Not after what I've done."

"Is this a vision of the past or the future? I can't do anything about the past but I can change the future. No wait, that doesn't look like Elenore's mother. It's Elenore! Something either will happen or she did something that she remembered." Margaret thought to herself.

"Whatever you did, we can work it out as a family. I don't want to lose you again. It's okay; you can tell me what you did. I still love you and I'll forgive you for whatever."

"What are you talking about Margaret?" Elenore asked as she blurred and the suitcases disappeared.

"The Torc showed me a vision. You were standing right where you are right now and you had your suitcases packed. And you were crying. And you were saying something about something, from your look it must've or will be pretty bad for you to react that way."

"I know it hasn't happened yet but now it's got me wondering what I did. I must've done something terrible or betrayed your trust somehow for me to do that."

"Even if you do something like that, I'll still forgive you. God knows you've forgiven me for everything. I don't want to be a hypocrite and not extend the same to you."

"Thank you Margaret. That means a lot to me." Elenore smiled and tilted her head.

"You're welcome. By the way Elenore, were you waiting for me to come up?" Margaret asked.

"Miss Hayward has some news you might want to hear. They're waiting for you in the living room. I'll go make dinner and some tea for later."

"Thank you Elenore." Margaret hugged Elenore feeling the conflict within and the hole inside of her as she felt Elenore hug her in return.

Then they let go and they went in separate directions. Margaret went to the living room where Madlax, Nadie, Ellis and their friend were. She barely heard nearby the argument Meg and Three Speed were having over about Madlax down the hall. She knew they both loved her and considered her their daughter on some level. But there were complications and those complications were at the root of it all. As she walked into the living room she saw Jodie and walked over to her in her usual friendly self.

"Hello Miss Hayward. I'm Margaret Burton. I'm sorry I kept you; I had some matters to attend to. Elenore told me that you have some information. Please can you tell me?"

"Thank you Miss Burton for your hospitality even in these circumstances. Nadie told me that you know about the Coven and your concerns. Well...I don't think you need to worry about the Coven. The Soldats and Enfant utterly destroyed them. Other than a couple of survivors the Coven is effectively extinct."

Nadie's jaw dropped in surprise. "Wow...Blueeyes...I know..."

Third Moon Rising

"I'm sorry about your people Miss Hayward." Margaret said in sympathy.

"Thank you." Jodie said trying to wrap her head around the words she had just said.

"Would you like some tea? I know Elenore is making some, so it should be ready soon." Margaret asked.

"Thank you Miss Burton but I don't think tea is going to help."

"So what would you like to drink? I know Elenore keeps the cabinet stocked. I think you could use one."

"A white Russian would be nice thank you."

Margaret smiled. "You're welcome. I'll go ask Elenore if she knows how to make one. Anyone else want a drink?"

"I'll have a whiskey sour please." Nadie chimed in.

"I'll just have the tea please. Thank you." Ellis said first looking at Margaret then Jodie

"Okay, I'll be right back." Margaret said leaving the living room as Limelda was coming up the stairs.

"Oh Limelda, would you like a drink. I'm going to get drinks for everyone."

Limelda was surprised. "A Mai Tai, thanks..." Limelda replied in a bit of a shock as she headed to the living room.

Margaret went down the hall to see Madlax standing outside the door where Three Speed and Meg were arguing.

"I just don't get it Margaret; why are they fighting over me? Of all people?" Madlax said with a sullen look on her face.

"They do care about you. You know at least Meg does."

"Sometimes I get the feeling that I was just a substitute for Elenore. Now that they're reunited..." Madlax depressingly replied.

"You know that isn't true. If that was the case she wouldn't be having that conversation right this minute. She treats you just like if you were her daughter. I know she's glad that you're out of Gazth-Sonika and before you start on how different you are. She knows and understands, but that doesn't stop her from loving you. Now do you want a drink? I've got three drink orders to fill so far."

Madlax was a bit surprised; Torc or not Margaret had changed. Today's events must've galvanized her into more assertive action from what she figured. "Sure, a pink lady would be nice. Thanks."

"You're welcome. Now go back to the living room and relax. You deserve it and who knows when we might have another chance."

"All right. Just call me when dinner's ready." Madlax said with slight smile.

"Okay." Margaret said cheerfully as she headed to the kitchen.

When she got there she made sure that Elenore knew that she was behind her.

"Smells good Elenore."

"Thanks Margaret, it will be done in a few minutes.

"When you get a chance could you help me make a few drinks? I figured Miss Hayward could use one."

"I can understand, so what does she want."

"A white Russian."

"Oh those are easy to make. What does everyone else want?"

"A Mai Tai, a whiskey sour and a pink lady. To be honest I have no idea what any of them are other than they're types of drinks."

"It's okay Margaret; I've had to learn to make drinks in case we had company that wanted them."

"Vanessa drinks."

"She only drinks wine and I leave her bottle." Elenore said with a smirk.

Margaret looked at the liquor cabinet and then turned back to Elenore a bit saddened.

"I think you had better have a few yourself. I get the feeling and not just from the Torc but something tells me you're going to need it."

Elenore looked at Margaret with an "I know I'm going to need it" look then she turned back to cooking.

"I really don't like drinking in front of you...I..." Elenore began then she cut off.

Third Moon Rising

Margaret was going to reply then Elenore's apron blurred and it was torn and there was a huge blood stain on it. Margaret realized what Elenore was trying to say; that day in the jungle and in that field hung on her like an albatross. Then it blurred back to normal. She could feel that Elenore took some comfort from wearing the apron as Margaret realized that Elenore's universe had changed just as much as hers did...

Ten minutes later as they sat; the mood around the dinner table was a bit somber.

Other than complements the group pretty much kept quiet.

After dinner Madlax and Three Speed excused themselves to have a talk in another room.

Margaret, Nadie and Ellis were talking to Jodie about staying the night which surprisingly got little resistance from her.

When the front bell rang Limelda checked who was at the door. She came back with Walter in tow.

Walter, Meg, Margaret, and Elenore went to the east wing kitchen. Before they got there the Torc dimly glowed. Then they all saw standing in the hall two figures; a young man dressed in a butler's uniform and an older woman dressed in an older version of Elenore's uniform.

Walter froze as he gazed upon the pair then he trembled out one word. "Mother!?"

Meg's eyes widened as she recognized both figures. Then she looked at Walter then back at the pair.

"Margaret, the Torc is glowing!" Elenore quietly exclaimed.

"This must be something important otherwise why would the Torc show us this." Margaret replied a bit confused but figuring it was something very important.

The older woman straightened out young Walter's uniform.

"I'm fine mother..." Young Walter protested.

"I know. But you know how your father is." Young Walter's mother said in an understanding tone.

"Yes, I know. It seems that I can't seem to please him. He doesn't give Meg half the hard time he does me..."

"Well sweetie you're going to be head of the Baker family when your father retires. Our family has served the Burton estate for a thousand years. So your father wants you to do the best job you can so we continue to serve. As for your sister..." Young Walter's started to say but she was interrupted by footsteps. She looked to see a tall red haired young woman walking towards them.

"Walter, go get your father, tell him to call the police and get my gun!!! Move now!!!" Young Walter's mother pushed him down the hall keeping herself between Walter and the young woman. Young Walter ran down the hall past Margaret and the others.

"Hello Elenore, it's a pleasure to finally meet you." The young woman said pointing a gun at the elder Elenore.

"I don't believe I have the pleasure..." Elenore responded.

"Pardon my manners, you can call me Altena."

"Well Altena, I assume the council sent you."

"Quite correct, the council was amazed that you eluded them for so long. But then again that's what one would expect from the woman who was one half of Noir."

Elenore slowly tensed up. "Well, you got me at last. Just leave my family alone; they know nothing..."

Then Elenore sprang into action but before she could get to Altena she was shot six times. As Elenore fell to the floor she had a smile on her face as she looked down the hall.

"MOTHER!!!" Walter shouted as he rushed for his mother but he went right through them both.

Altena could hear footsteps coming quickly and she didn't have time to reload so she ran in the direction she came from till she was out of sight.

"ELENORE!!" John Baker yelled as he ran to his dying wife.

"MOTHER!!" A younger Meg and Walter cried as they ran up with Walter carrying a first aid kit.

"Hang on Elenore. Please don't leave me. Please don't die..." John pleaded as he held her hand as the blood was pouring out of her wounds.

"Are...the children... safe?" Elenore gasped.

"Yes the children are safe."

"Good...I...love you J..." Elenore said then she died her hand slipping from John's grasp.

Then all four disappeared and the Torc stopped glowing.

"I understand..." Elenore said sadly.

"Understand what sweetie?" Meg asked before turning to an angry Walter. His hands were shaking in rage and grief.

"Why he wanted me to look after Margaret." Elenore replied.

"You were in his eyes the only connection to his wife. Seeing you had her name and you do look a lot like her." Margaret sadly added.

"Damn her! She killed mother and now the bitch has dug her claws into Elenore!" Walter angrily interrupted without really talking to anyone.

"What are you talking about Walter?" Meg asked trying to calm Walter. The Torc sent unseen calming waves out and Walter began to calm down.

"Earlier a mutual friend needed to hack into a few Soldat databases. He found some disturbing data..." Walter began before Meg cut him off.

"Before you go on, Elenore and Margaret need to know the truth especially if that woman is involved." Meg said before turning to Elenore and Margaret. "The truth is; our mother was an assassin for the Soldats. She was part of a two woman team known as Noir. Apparently something happened that made our mother run away and go into hiding. As she was on the run she met and fell in love with our father.

All we know about the Soldats is what our mother told us, even though our father didn't want us to know. She told us in case something like we just saw happened. The short version; the Soldats have been around for a thousand years even predating the mafia and other known crime groups. It's whispered that they had a hand in the founding of Nafrece. If your grandfather didn't pull what he pulled I would've told you when you became an adult." Meg said with the last part directed at Elenore.

"Better late than never, but what does this Altena want with Elenore? Didn't she do enough when she shot your mother in cold blood?" Margaret asked sadly looking at Meg then Elenore.

"I'm betting the info Walter got may shed some light on the subject. Elenore are you okay?"

Elenore stood stunned. The revelations and what she witnessed threw her for a major loop. It didn't help that she still had a huge hole in her memory.

"I'm sorry watching grandma die like that reminded me of when grandpa died in front of me. I didn't want him to die or leave me too." Elenore said in a melancholic tone while tears flowed down her cheeks. Margaret held Elenore close. "I miss him too..." Margaret said sadly neither of them noticing that Walter was getting upset.

"Why don't you two go in the kitchen and wait for us. Meg said to Margaret and Elenore. The pair went into the kitchen and then Meg turned to Walter. She got close to Walter within whisper distance.

"Look Walter, seeing that upset me as well. But neither of us can change the past... Despite your opinion of father you have to realize those two girls loved him regardless of what he did. So keep your opinion to yourself for now okay please Wally?" Meg whispered as she hugged Walter.

"You know that's the first time in a long time that you called me that Meggy Peggy. All right I'll tone down the contempt. But you need to see this data before you show it to Elenore and Margaret."

"I know you mentioned Altena. What does she have to do with Elenore?"

Walter showed Meg a piece of paper with certain parts highlighted. What Meg saw stunned her; if this data was correct Altena had Elenore murder seven people, plant listening devices all within a seven year period. Altena's orders stopped in mid two thousand and nine with the reason being listed as "Sanctioned Sapling disruption at the Manor".

Third Moon Rising

"This why I want that medical file as well. That cunt had something done to Elenore and I have a good idea what that is. For the time being keep her away from any phones. You might have to take her with you for Margaret and the others sake." Walter said in angry but concerned tone.

"What do we tell Elenore? Hi sweetie, guess what. You planted spy devices in your home and murdered people by the orders of your grandma's killer. Oh I'm sure that's going to go over well. Does that data say anything about her child? I wouldn't doubt that Altena had a hand in my grandchild's murder."

Walter shook his head in denial. "I wouldn't doubt it either but I didn't see any data regarding her. As for Elenore why don't ask her yourself, she's standing right behind you." Walter said as he saw Elenore walking up behind Meg.

"Is what you and Uncle Walter said true mom?" Elenore asked in sadness and horror.

"I'm afraid so sweetie." Meg replied.

Elenore hung her head down low. "How could I do such things...?" Elenore began before Margaret grabbed her by the arms and shook her.

"Elenore, listen to me. I don't think you did any of those things under your own free will. Remember what Lady Rhiannon said. And remember what Friday Monday did to me. I bet that lady did the same thing to you. As for the devices, it's okay. Limelda and Madlax took care of them. Once we get the file we'll find what she did to you and Margaret. So please for yours and mine sakes don't beat yourself up."

Elenore thought for a bit and then replied. "You're right Margaret but I still feel terrible. I can only imagine what you must think of me now."

"Elenore, you're not the first person in this family with blood on their hands... I don't think any less of you my big sister. And I love you." Margaret responded as she hugged Elenore.

"I love you too Margaret. But Uncle Walter is right. I might have to for the safety everyone here leave the house."

"I understand. Do what you have to. And before you ask I'll have Madlax or Vanessa to go get you when Nakhl finds Alice."

"Okay ladies, I have a file to go pick up. Elenore for the time being just stay away from phones just in case. I'll be back..." Walter said as he began to leave.

"All right, see you soon Uncle Walter..." Elenore said with sympathy for her uncle. Knowing that watching what he just had seen saddened and angered him.

Meg stopped Walter and whispered a few things to Walter. Then Walter turned to Elenore. "The tacos are on the counter, right?" He asked.

"Yes Uncle Walter they're on the counter. Are you bringing Vanessa back with you?" Elenore replied.

"Of course, we may be a little late though..." Walter added as he began to leave again.

Back in the living room; "Nadie...the bracelet is glowing again...oops it stopped." Ellis said to Nadie who was deep in thought.

Nadie's train of thought was interrupted the front doors opening and closing. Margaret came into the living room soon after.

"I'm sorry we took so long...the Torc glowed and showed us a vision." Margaret said in an apologetic tone.

"The Bracelet glowed too then it stopped. Maybe it was reacting to the Torc." Ellis replied.

"So what did the Torc show you?" Nadie asked innocently.

Margaret hung her head a little low. She didn't want to lie to her new friends but there were things that were better left unsaid.

"The Torc showed us the murder of Elenore's grandma by a Soldat."

Ellis and Nadie were saddened and shocked.

"If Walter saw that...I assume that was him leaving just now."

"Oh, that's right. You know Mr. Baker."

Third Moon Rising

"Yeah, I do. We've met each other at international conferences. He did say one time that his mom was shot." Jodie replied, her voice a little slurred.

Margaret knew it was the alcohol talking. She could feel the pain Jodie was feeling and her heavy drinking was her attempt to numb the pain, just like Elenore...

"Hey Blueeyes, you look a little tired there...maybe you should go to bed." Nadie said trying to defuse a situation before it started. Margaret caught what Nadie was trying to do and asked the Torc to send waves of slumber to Jodie. But she didn't need to; Jodie had all ready passed out.

"We're sorry about that." Ellis began.

"It's okay...I understand. Let's get her to bed. I'll show you to a room." Margaret said relieved that nothing was said that would be regretted later.

Ellis and Nadie picked up Jodie and followed Margaret to a guest room where they laid her down on the bed. After they made Jodie comfortable they left the room.

"I gather something the vision mentioned something that would've upset Blueeyes?" Nadie asked after they were back in the living room.

"Yes, it did..." Margaret replied with her head hung low.

"Say no more...I understand..." Nadie replied.

"Understand what Nadie?" Ellis asked.

"It's family business. And we should keep our noses out of it." Nadie said trying to explain.

"I don't remember sticking our noses in anything. If we did wouldn't we smell something?" Ellis replied.

Margaret and then Nadie laughed. "I'll explain later Ellis..."

"Yes sir!" Ellis replied.

Across town Nakhl was from the shadows watching Alice sing.

"An interesting song...Canta per me. She sings very beautifully, a pity Elenore Baker doesn't sing. If Alice's ability is any indication...then again I don't believe I've heard her sing. Perhaps I should ask her to sing the next we meet." Nakhl thought to herself.

She waited for Alice to finish and then she stepped from the shadows. "That was very beautiful, but there was sadness in your voice." Nakhl said sincerely.

Alice was taken aback a bit; Nakhl had approached unseen and unheard. Plus there was that feeling that there was something familiar about this woman.

"Thank you, that's my favorite song out all the songs the nun taught me." Alice answered keeping an eye on Nakhl and glancing to the left.

"Well that answers that question. Though she seems relaxed she's ready for action. I must do this carefully..." Nakhl thought to herself.

"What other songs do you know?" Nakhl asked noticing someone approaching from the left.

Alice was about to answer when throwing knives hurled towards them. Alice easily dodged and Nakhl caught the one headed to her.

Nakhl sighed as Chloe lunged from the shadows towards them.

"You again..." Alice spat at Chloe.

"Thank you for the weapon I was feeling a bit naked without one." Nakhl said nonchalantly.

Chloe pulled out more knives and the battle was joined...

Mireille looked at her watch and frowned. They had gotten in easily, as per Badgis' assurances the security system was down and so was the power for most of that part of the hospital. The first complication came when they file two files with the same name. So they took both...Mireille reasoned that Badgis would figure it out.

Third Moon Rising

The second came when the power came back on as they were heading to where the Soldats couldn't make too much of a fuss. The security system was out of commission and they weren't in any area where they wouldn't trip any alarms.

The third complication was since the security system was out the Soldats sent guards. For the last five minutes it had been a running gunfight.

Thankfully all involved had silencers on their guns. But they were trapped and the only cover they could find was the entrance to the ladies room. Kirika reached into her pocket looking for another clip when she unintentionally slipped on the ring.

When she did that a flood of memories filled her vision. She remembered...she remembered it all. Some of the memories saddened her. Then she looked at the files.

She read both files with inhuman speed. Visions of the past flew past her and she understood.

Mireille wondered what Kirika was doing when they were surrounded by black feathers blocking her vision.

When Mireille could see again they were near their contact point. Kirika handed Mireille the files.

"Mireille before you say anything...listen carefully. I can't explain right now but in five minutes Walter will show up. Give both files to him, you'll find him to be a great ally once he reads them. And whatever you do...don't draw your gun. I finally remember everything Mireille." She pointed at the files. "Elenore was supposed to be the fourth sapling but something happened and Altena lost contact with her. I have some things I must do. I'll return soon...and Mireille...I love you." Kirika said with smile before she disappeared into the darkness. Mireille was left standing confused. First it was that little teleport (?) trick and then Kirika giving what was for her a lengthy speech. Then disappearing not before uttering three words she thought Kirika would never utter "*I love you.*" .

As she walked to the contact point she read the files. There was a lot medical terminology she didn't understand but in both files Altena's name was mentioned and that got her attention.

When she got there she waited when a thought crossed her mind. How did Kirika know who was coming and who was Walter anyway?