

## Chapter 10. Remnants' of legends and pink tutus

March 17<sup>th</sup> 2001 (*Madlax is 10, Meg is 34*)

In a building in Gazth-Sonika, Meg sat in a wicker chair with a low back. She was staring at a picture of a six year old girl in a pink ballet outfit complete with pink tutu and wide smile on her face. Meg smiled warmly.

Madlax came to side of the chair and looked down to see the picture blocking Meg's view in the process.

"I don't see you smile very often with your mask off. So what'cha so happy about?"

Meg moved Madlax out of the way. "Just looking at my daughter."

"Awww...she's cute."

Meg smirked. "She's two years older than you. This was when she was six." Meg's smile faded.

"Do you get to see her?" Madlax asked innocently.

"No...I haven't seen her in years." Meg answered sadly.

"If she's your daughter how come you haven't seen her?"

"There are a few reasons..."

"Your job?"

"That's one of them."

"How come you became an agent Duvie?"

Meg sat back in the chair. "Well it wasn't my first choice. You see I was trained to be a maid and take my parents place when they retired. A few things happened and I wound up unemployed. For awhile I worked as a domestic servant for the elderly. Till one day I saw something I shouldn't have and I was given a choice; either become an agent or get a bullet in the head. Naturally I took the first option but that meant I would see her even less."

"Is all that true?" Madlax asked a bit skeptically.

"Yes it is, but I'm not going to tell you everything."

"Huh, I wouldn't have figured a tuff old lady like you being a house maid..." Madlax joked.

Present day

"Hey old lady...you with us?" Madlax asked Meg they sat in the hospital waiting room.

Meg snapped out of her funk. "Sorry, I'm just...I can understand her being angry with me but I didn't think she would..."

"That whole reaction was strange...at first she seemed normal, angry but normal. If she was to go in shock she would've done it in Doctor Tudor's office. I can't explain it...but I think there's more to this." Vanessa supposed.

"Yeah, but ya have to figure in that she was spacing out before that happened .And even from what I know of her that's really not like her to do that." Madlax added.

"That's true; I assumed that was from seeing Miss Baker here."

"Meg's got a good reason, but there are a few things I would like to know." Madlax said trying to defend Meg.

"Yes, I have a few questions too." Vanessa added in an angry tone.

"I'm sure you both do, but this isn't the time or the place. Plus shouldn't Elenore hear the answers as well?"

Vanessa sighed sadly. "I can wait till Elenore has her crack at you."

Madlax looked at them both dejectedly; granted there were some unanswered questions and emotions were running a bit high. Plus she didn't like the people she cared about fighting each other.

"Look, once Elenore is up and about we'll all sit down and talk it over. But I do have a couple questions for you old lady."

"Do you really have to keep calling me "old lady" but anyways go ahead?" Meg asked a bit annoyed.

“You still have that picture and it is really her?” Madlax asked to a now surprised Meg and leaving Vanessa a bit confused.

“What picture? The one she took this afternoon?” Vanessa asked trying to clear things up.

“No, I’m talking about a picture that Meg has of a little girl in a pink tutu.”

“Pink tutu?” Vanessa asked even more confused.

Meg reached into her purse and pulled out a photograph in a protective sleeve. “What do you think?”

Meg said showing the picture to Madlax and then Vanessa.

“Is that Elenore?” Vanessa asked a bit surprised. Meg nodded in agreement. Vanessa smirked and looked toward the ER doors and quietly said. “You better get better soon...”

Seeing that Meg and Vanessa were in a better mood Madlax smiled a bit but she was just as worried about Margaret and wondering how she would take the news.

“Vanessa, I need to borrow your car. I need to go check on Margaret and tell her the news.”

Meg grew concerned. “Madlax what do you mean check on Margaret?” While Vanessa pulled out her car keys and handed them to Madlax.

“I guess we all have some explaining to do. But right now I do need to get to Margaret.”

“You know she’ll want to come here and I don’t think an army will stop her.” Vanessa said.

Madlax sighed. “I know, I’ll bring her here and have Limelda watch Laetitia.”

“Vanessa chuckled. “Oh she’ll just love that.”

“I know...” Madlax said as she left. Meg wanted to ask but she decided to hold off on the questions for now.

Meg looked at the picture once before putting it back in her purse. “I’m going to check on Elenore. Hopefully they can let us see her.” Meg said getting up from the chair and Vanessa soon followed. Once they entered the ER, they went up the main desk and asked for the doctor working on Elenore. A woman dressed in ER scrubs approached.

“Doctor, how is she?” Vanessa asked apprehensively.

“For the moment, she’s stable but unconscious. The preliminary tests showed that it wasn’t a heart attack or aneurism. What caused her collapse is still undetermined but there are a couple of things I need to ask either you or Miss Baker.” The Doctor replied and they both gave consent.

“We noticed two scars on her; one on her back and the other on her left arm. How recent are those?” Meg looked at Vanessa. “She was shot eight months ago in Gazth-Sonika.”

“Did she express the wounds didn’t heal right or anything of that nature?” The Doctor asked.

“Have they fully healed?” Meg asked very alarmed.

“As far we can tell they are which brings to my next question. Her toxicology report found that she has blood alcohol level of .032 but no other substances. Do either you know how long she’s drinking or has she done so earlier in the day?”

“To be honest, for as long I’ve known her I’ve never seen her pick up a drink. She did say she was having nightmares due to what happened to her.” Vanessa answered noticing Meg wasn’t too happy.

“So Post Traumatic Syndrome is a factor here but I don’t think it caused her shock and collapse.”

“One last question before you can see her.”

Meg and Vanessa consented bracing themselves for whatever.

“How long ago was she pregnant? She shows all the signs of a previous pregnancy but we can’t find it in our records.”

“We’re just as confused as you are Doctor. How she managed to hide this from everybody, I have no idea.”

“We’ll keep her overnight for observation, hopefully she’ll regain consciousness and you can bring her home tomorrow. You can go see her now.” Doctor said at a loss for words.

Meg and Vanessa went into the room where Elenore was. She was still unconscious and hooked up to a monitor.

Meg grabbed Vanessa's arm, not hard but enough to get her attention. "Looks like I'm not the only one having to give an explanation."

Vanessa looked at Meg then at Elenore. "I think Madlax was right about all us having to explain..."

Limelda stood in front of Laetitia's door with a wicked smile. The last fifteen minutes were quite enlightening; oh at first she thought that Madlax was fooling around the maid and that Rene woman. She was relieved that nothing of the sort happened.

The truth was interesting though; first she learned that Duvet considered a legend in some circles was in Nafrece and she was the maid's mother! Then while checking on Margaret she and Madlax were disarmed by that Nakhli woman. Embarrassing as that was she did enjoy seeing the airhead get chewed out by her. Then finding out that the maid was in the hospital and that the airhead and the creepy little brat had a major hand in it. She got loaded with watching the little brat but at least she got a date out of Madlax. It was just her and the brat. Madlax took the airhead and Nakhli with her to the hospital.

Limelda opened the door and saw Laetitia in a corner sulking. Walking slowly and savoring the moment Limelda bent down to Laetitia. "Awww what's wrong princess, somebody pee in your cornflakes?"

Limelda asked in mock sympathy. Laetitia didn't even look up.

"Well, you did it this time princess." Limelda began to say but she smiled wickedly and continued.

"Let me tell you a story; once upon a time before the civil war and Madlax there was this agent.

Her name was Duvet, why she was called that...well I don't know why but I'm sure somebody does.

You see Duvet became known in some circles for taking out gangs, terrorists and other garbage all by herself like Madlax does. One of the strange things about Duvet is she always wore a white featureless mask with only the eyes showing, how she talked out of that thing is beyond me. The other thing was that she loved to torture her prisoners." She took Laetitia's hand and pressed on her fingers. "You see she would start by driving nails into the finger joints and then work her way to the hand." Limelda said as she applied pressure on Laetitia's hand watching the look on Laetitia's face with unmasked glee.

"Then she would drive nails into every joint she could find and slowly flay them alive until they answered her questions. Sometimes she would open them up and set their insides on fire. I can see by the look on your face you don't believe me. Well, it's all true for you see I saw all this." Limelda rose up and turned towards the door. "Wonder why I told that story little princess. You see that little stunt you pulled on the maid that wound her up in the hospital, well it turns out her mother is Duvet. Now imagine if she did that to somebody she didn't know...imagine what she would do to somebody who hurt her only daughter. Something to think about princess..." Limelda turned her head long enough to see the frightened look on Laetitia's face and then she went out the door with a very satisfied look on her face.

Back at the hospital; Elenore had been moved to a private room. Vanessa waited in the waiting room in case Madlax came back most likely with Margaret in tow.

Meg sat next to the bed dejectedly looking at Elenore who was still unconscious.

"I don't know if you can hear me sweetie but I want to say I'm sorry. I know it's a poor excuse but there's a lot...how could I explain? How could I explain that because I caught your uncle in an undercover intelligence operation would wind me up as an operative for Nafrece Intelligence? And then there's your grandfather; who wanted one of us to replace him so he could retire. Well that didn't go as planned; he found out that Walter was gay and he disowned him. As for me...well having an affair with Richard and having you when he was married got me barred from the house and to top it off by defending Walter, Anna had an ally to keep me from seeing you. For a lot of years I was out of the country...I didn't want to be...if I couldn't see you then being far away wouldn't hurt as much. From

seeing your condition; that was a bad idea. I don't know if sorry would ever cut it but I'm sorry for that as well.

The only thing I had to remind me of you was that picture of you in that pink tutu...some days it got me through the worse days. I don't know how I am going tell you when you regain consciousness. "

Meg got up, brushed Elenore's hair out of her eyes and kissed her on the forehead. Then she started walking toward the door.

"I'm...still mad...but I forgive you...mommy..." Elenore said groggily.

Meg smiled and turned to see Elenore trying to open her eyes and she went to her side.

"By... the way..."

"Yes, sweetie?"

"I...heard...every...single...word...you said."