

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 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

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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."

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"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.

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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 guessing 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.

"My name is Alice! B..." Alice started but couldn't finish.

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

"And what would've you done if you knew Vanessa?" Alice and Elenore asked 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.

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"All I could've done; was taken you 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."

"Do you 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 dark part of me?"

"Yes Elenore, even the dark part of you." 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 then turning to Elenore. "It's up to you."

The flames disappeared as Elenore approached. Alice was ready for a fight but Elenore bent down to her level.

In an apologetic tone she spoke "I'm sorry I locked you away. But I'm ready to accept my truth...all of it."

"It's going to be very painful..." Alice replied mocking Elenore slightly.

"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 holding out her hand.

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

"All right what are they?"

"Please don't forget about me."

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

"Sing."

"Sing?"

"Yes sing...sing when you're lonely, or to your children or friends, sing for me please."

"I will." Elenore said as Alice placed her hand in Elenore's and the two of them glowed and transformed into a ball of light. Then she reappeared wearing a white dress with red shoes as the door of truth appeared.

"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.

"I have 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. "I finally understand Margaret..." She said between tears.

"Understand what Elenore?" 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." Elenore answered as she got up from the floor. "I do have a question. Knowing what you know now, what do you think of me?"

Margaret shook her head. "I thought I said this before Elenore. I and everyone here doesn't think any less of you and I love you Elenore." Margaret said as she hugged Elenore.

Everyone returned to the real world minus Alice.

Elenore and Margaret warmly hugged each other as they returned....