

## **Part 1 Anxiety express (two months after the events in the series)**

Disclaimer: I don't own Madlax or Noir. This is a fan made work of fiction.

To Vanessa Rene the last two months with Madlax and Limelda Jorg were to say the least "interesting". There were some tense moments between her and Limelda but it eventually worked itself out.

Now the trio was heading back to the demilitarized zone. Looking at Madlax through the rear view mirror as she drove she saw that she had the same look of unease on her.

Madlax couldn't explain why but all she knew that they had to get back to the DMZ as fast as possible. That was five days ago and now Vanessa was wondering what was going on.

It was near midnight when they had reached the boarding house they were staying at Vanessa found a note shoved under the door.

Madlax picked up the note and read it.

Madlax's look of unease intensified as she looked at the note.

"What does note say?" Vanessa asked in a worried tone wondering what new trouble they were probably getting into.

Madlax handed Vanessa the note. The lettering was in a man's handwriting and it was dated five days ago.

*V. Rene*

*Margaret called. Call back ASAP*

*Urgent*

Vanessa looked at the note and pondered on why Margaret would call. She knew if something did happen that required her assistance Elenore would call...unless something happened to Elenore. Vanessa's mind flashed with worse case scenarios one after the other. She took a deep breath and calmed herself down.

"I hope everything is alright. I have to admit it's unusual for Margaret to call."

Madlax looked at Vanessa with the same look of unease as before.

"But still, you should call." Madlax responded as they both heard the shower beginning to run.

"Since Limelda has beaten us both to the shower, might as well. It should be the middle of the day in Nafrece."

Madlax took the rest of their gear inside as Vanessa headed to the phone.

She pulled out a small black book from her bag and looked for Margaret's number. Once she had found it she dialed.

The phone rang three times then fourth. Vanessa anxiety was beginning to swell but she surmised if Elenore didn't pick up the phone then they were out.

Vanessa was about to hang up when Margaret answered.

"Hello?" Margaret said with the same unease that Madlax had.

"Hello Margaret." Vanessa replied in a calm tone hoping that would put Margaret at ease.

"Vanessa?" Margaret asked.

"Yes, it's me Margaret. I just got home and got your note. What's going on?"

Vanessa heard crying over the receiver and she began to wonder what was going on.

"Vanessa are you alright? Are you hurt? Please come home....Elenore..." Margaret said between sobs.

"I'm fine Margaret. What happened? What happened to Elenore?"

"Please...come home..." Margaret said crying.

Vanessa realized something had happened. She wanted Margaret to give her details but from the sounds of her voice she was too distraught to answer.

"Alright, I'll catch the red eye back to Nafrece. Please stay calm till I get there okay Margaret." Vanessa said as the worse case scenarios played in her head like a broken dvd player.

"Okay..." Margaret said then hung up without saying goodbye which wasn't a good sign.

As Vanessa hung up the phone she turned to Madlax who had a look of despair that wasn't usual.

"I'm sorry Madlax I have to go back to Nafrece."

"I understand do you want me to come with you?" Madlax asked.

"No, but thanks' anyway. Can you give me a ride to the airport?" Vanessa asked as she packed what little she had into her suitcase.

"Sure, just call me when you get to Nafrece." Madlax replied.

An hour and a half later Vanessa boarded the red eye back to Nafrece. She slept uncomfortably wondering what had happened...

## **End of part 1**

### **Part 2 Barren past, lonely memories** (Nafrece midafternoon)

The weather was clear though a tad warm for late summer as Vanessa got off the plane. Part of her was focused on Margaret and Elenore, another on Madlax and yet another part hoped that she would get a chance to take a bath or at least a shower.

All those concerned followed like hounds on the trail of fresh meat as she went through customs and then to the taxi stand.

The traffic was horrible and the conversation with the driver boring as get out as she took the two hour trip to Margaret's.

When she arrived she gladly paid the overpriced fare as got out of the taxi. As she looked at her own car parked nearby she noticed that it had not been moved from where she had parked it over two months ago. She put any questions about the state of vehicle as entered the building. Every step an anxiety ridden journey filled with possible horrors that awaited her.

She reached Margaret's door and knocked hoping that Elenore would answer and joke with her. Her hopes were dashed as the door opened to reveal a small red haired girl no older than five.

"She's inside." Laetitia said with a concerned look on her face that adults should have. Putting aside any lecture about Laetitia's social graces or safety Vanessa entered as Laetitia moved aside to let Vanessa in.

"Margaret?" Vanessa said with anxiety in her voice towards the living room. She noticed that the room was dishevelled and the usual flowers in vases were wilted.

The dishevelled look continued to the living room where Margaret was sitting. As Vanessa entered Margaret sprang from the couch was sitting.

"VANESSA!" Margaret said as she rushed to and hugged Vanessa crying into her blouse.

"Margaret what happened? Where's Elenore?" Vanessa asked concerned as she looked about the room.

"Elenore's sick...my fault..." Was all that Margaret was able to get out.

"Margaret calm down. Explain what happened."

"Elenore is the hospital." Laetitia said more calmly but saddened just the same.

Vanessa looked at the small girl who was on some level more mature for her age than she appeared.

"Can you tell me what happened?" Vanessa asked Laetitia.

"Elenore got hit by a car." Laetitia replied.

"What?! How badly is she injured?" Vanessa asked as she tried replay the scene in her head.

"I don't know, all I know she had a breakdown in the street." Laetitia answered.

Vanessa shook Margaret to get her to focus.

"Margaret is that true? Which hospital is she in? I need to know."

"Morton." Margaret said.

Vanessa pondered on the name as she mentally went through the local hospitals in her head. Then it hit her "breakdown in the street...breakdown" and realized that Elenore wasn't in a regular hospital.

In a quieter and sympathetic tone she asked Margaret. "Oh no... Margaret how long has Elenore been there?"

"Almost a week...I wanted to give her some clean clothes....but I couldn't really find any of her clothes..."

"You mean she's been there for almost a week and you haven't seen her!?" Vanessa asked in surprise.

"No. I don't know where it is."

That didn't surprise Vanessa one bit but she did find it odd that even Margaret couldn't find Elenore's clothing.

Vanessa looked at the time and realized that it was too late for visiting hours.

"Since it's too late for visiting hours today we'll go tomorrow. But first I need a shower then we're going to see what Elenore has for clothing.

"Okay." Margaret replied with a sad but grateful smile.

After Vanessa cleaned herself up, Margaret and she went to Elenore's room. What Vanessa saw saddened her a bit. Though the room was almost Spartan it was disheveled as the rest of the apartment. On the floor with the glass broken was a picture frame with Elenore as child sitting on her grandfather's lap. Vanessa carefully picked up the broken frame and placed on the night stand. Then she looked in Elenore's closet.

What she saw deepened her sense of melancholy; inside other than her school uniform where nothing but maid's uniforms. So she looked in Elenore's dresser. She found her underwear which she took out, a few spare jabots and her swim suit which she left. But she couldn't find any other piece of clothing.

Then the thought crossed her mind. Other than when she was little all she saw Elenore wear was a maid's uniform.

"Margaret?"

"Yes?"

"Have you ever seen Elenore wear anything else but her uniform?"

"She came to my school one time disguised in her school uniform."

"I know about that. But any other outfits?"

Margaret pondered a bit.

"Come to think of it, I've never seen Elenore wear anything but her maid's uniform. I wonder why?"

"That's a good question. Tomorrow we'll pick up some clothes for her."

"Will they let us see her?"

"I don't see why not. Both you and I are listed as her emergency contacts..."

The word contacts echoed slightly in Vanessa's mind as she remembered that conversation Elenore and she had in Gazth-Sonika.

*"You're my only other friend..."* Vanessa remembered Elenore saying and wondered what was going through Elenore's mind...

Vanessa went and got a dust pan and fox tail from the kitchen and swept up the broken glass on the floor. While she was sweeping she noticed something under the bed. Using the foxtail she brought it towards her and saw it was a key.

From the looks of it, it was a recently made copy. On the key was a red sticker and written in black was the number 24.

Vanessa pondered what the key was for but it was enough to get her curiosity up. She looked underneath the bed to see if she could find anything. She used the foxtail to sweep anything that she couldn't reach towards her. Finding nothing she rose from the floor and hit her head on the corner of the mattress which aroused her suspicion. She lifted the mattress and saw a small white envelope.

Picking it up and rationalized to herself for opening it that it may provide a clue to what was going on.

Opening the unsealed envelope she saw three plastic encased clippings. On further examination she saw that they were obituaries. One was her grandfather John Baker that much she knew but other two names she didn't know. On further examination she found a pattern; the oldest of the three was from nineteen years ago and that was her father Eli, the second one dated fifteen years ago was her mothers, and the last was her grandfather which was nine years ago. Vanessa tried to figure why Elenore would keep something that was important to her underneath the mattress. She took a closer look at the envelope and saw written inside "*bank box 12174 mom*" and the words "*proof*".

"What proof? Proof of what Elenore? What did you find? Did it cause your breakdown?" Vanessa said to herself.

Vanessa through searched the room and found a deposit box key. She had no clue to where either key went to but there was something she could check; Elenore's PC. She chided herself for not checking that earlier.

She turned on the computer and waited for it to finish the start up routine. The desktop wasn't a surprise. Elenore had a picture of Margaret and her standing in their swimsuits at the beach. Looking over the desktop she didn't find anything unusual just the regular program icons. Then she checked her documents. Nothing of importance was found, though she did find a cute little love poem and wondered who she wrote it to. Apparently Elenore wrote about her love for another woman which kind of shocked Vanessa. Granted there was nothing wrong with that but the fact she didn't know made her wonder how well she knew Elenore.

Then she clicked on the icon for the internet. "Let's see where you've been Elenore..." Vanessa said to herself with a little apprehension of what she would find.

Looking at the favorites she found that Elenore had bookmarked a quite a few GLBT websites. But caught her attention was she had bookmarked the police public database.

Vanessa surmised that Elenore used it to investigate Margaret's suitors among other things.

Then she checked the history and what she found surprised her.

The weeks before her breakdown Elenore had been visiting near death experience websites, a couple of videos on You Porn, and quite a few visits to the police data base.

"Who were you investigating Elenore?" Vanessa asked herself.

She didn't want to go rooting the database without knowing what she was looking for and she was admittedly stumped for the moment. Plus she was getting hungry as well.

After turning off the computer she went back to the living room. Margaret was calmer than she was before.

"I'll make us something to eat, but I do want to ask you a few questions Margaret."

"Okay and thank you Vanessa."

Vanessa made some pasta hoping that would help Margaret calm down or at least talkative.

After dinner and making some tea they sat in the living room.

"Now please Margaret tell me what has been going on or much as you know."

"Ever since we got back from Gazth-Sonika Elenore has been acting really weird."

"How weird?"

"Some nights she'll wake up screaming and crying. She kept looking over her shoulder and keeping the shades drawn for some reason. One time she left and didn't come back for three days. And there are some nights that she goes out and doesn't come home till the afternoon. And now she's sick and in the hospital and I don't know why."

That raised major red flags in Vanessa's mind. "*What is going on Elenore?*" She thought to herself.

"Did you ask her why she was going out or why she was gone for so long?"

"She kept telling me, it was a private matter and it was better that I stayed out of it."

"Do you have any new suitors Margaret?" Vanessa asked.

"Umm...no why Vanessa?" Margaret asked with mild confusion.

"I know Elenore has a habit of investigating people who take an interest in you and I wondered if that was the cause."

"Why would Elenore investigate people?" Margaret asked surprised.

"I guess she wanted to keep bad people away from you. I have to admit, there's not really much I know about Elenore and I've known her for years."

"Same here and I feel ashamed. Elenore's in trouble and I feel powerless to help her. Why can't she tell me at least?" Margaret asked with a saddened look knowing that she too didn't know much about the woman she loved and was taking care of her for so long.

*"Okay scratch that...I guess I'll have to ask Elenore herself..."* Vanessa thought to herself.

"Hopefully tomorrow Elenore can give us some answers..." Vanessa said with some hope but a part of her knew she was going to hit full steam into Elenore's great wall of denial.

## **End of part 2**

### **Part 3 Fresh ink on the page**

The next morning brought little relief to the trio as they headed out. After a brief stop to buy Elenore some clothes other than underwear they headed to Morton Hospital.

When they got to the hospital they noticed it was well kept and away from any neighborhoods.

They had some hassle with security till Margaret put her foot down and asked for the doctor in charge of Elenore's case.

Ten minutes later a woman in early thirties wearing casual clothing came down to the lobby.

"Hello I'm Doctor Emily Du Pont. How can I help you?"

"I'm Margaret Burton and this is Vanessa Rene. We're here to see Elenore."

"I would like to talk with Miss Rene if I could. Elenore has her listed as her emergency contact."

"Alright, I have questions as well as clean clothing for Elenore."

Emily led Vanessa to a room nearby.

Once they were seated Vanessa began.

"I do apologize if I haven't been here sooner. I was in Gazth-Sonika taking care of personal business and I only received notice that Elenore was in the hospital last night."

"I understand. I would've liked to ask Miss Burton but she seemed reluctant to talk."

"I'm not sure she knows what's going on with Elenore. Elenore tends to keep things to herself. So may I ask what happened? All I know is that she was struck by a car and had a breakdown."

"From the report we got, she was trying to get Miss Burton's little sister out of the street when a car sideswiped her and ran. She suffered an injury on her back, and then she curled up saying that she didn't want to die again over and over. She was taken to the hospital and her injury treated. My question is why was she saying that?"

"That I can explain. More than two months ago Elenore and Margaret were in Gazth-Sonika visiting me. There Elenore had a near death experience from being chased and injured by Galza rebels. Fortunately the doctors were able to revive her, but for a bit she was...dead." Vanessa said bending the truth.

Emily's face saddened and then she said. "That explains a lot. At least now we know what we're dealing with. We've had to sedate her a few times when she woke up screaming."

"Margaret told me the same thing as well. I'm upset that this has gone on for this long."

"That's understandable."

"Can we see her?" Vanessa asked.

"I can check if she wishes see anyone. Miss Rene, does Elenore have any other relatives?"

"No, all of her relatives are dead. Why do you ask?"

"A couple men claiming to be her uncle and family friend came to see her. But she refused to see them."

"Good. Could you allow no one but me and Margaret to see her? Something is going on and I rather have her safe."

"That's what she said as well. You needn't worry. Our security is quite good. Once Elenore stabilizes maybe she'll shed some light on this."

"Thank you doctor. I'll tell Margaret."

Afterwards they left the room and went their separate ways.

"Are they going to let us see her?" Margaret asked.

"They're going to check. But it's going to have to be just you and me. There's been some strangers pretending to be her relatives asking for her and I'm worried for her safety."

This saddened Margaret but she realized what ever trouble Elenore was in she was determined to make sure that Elenore was safe.

"Who do I talk to make the arrangements?" Margaret asked.

"You can talk to me miss." The security officer said from behind the counter.

After Margaret and Vanessa made the necessary arrangements to make sure only they were allowed to see her. Emily came back to the lobby.

"Will Elenore see us doctor?" Margaret asked.

"Yes. But I can only allow one of you at a time. I'm sorry Miss Burton but your little sister isn't allowed."

"We understand. We've made the arrangement that only Vanessa and I can see her." Margaret said.

"Do you want to see her first or do you want me go first." Vanessa asked.

"You haven't seen her in a couple months and I think she'll be happy to see you. I can wait."

"Alright. I'll be back soon." Vanessa said and she followed Emily to where Elenore was.

Vanessa was led to a bare room with just a cushioned mat on the floor sitting in a corner was Elenore with her head down dressed in a hospital johnny.

"Elenore, your friend Vanessa is here and she brought you some clothes from home."

Elenore raised her head and smiled briefly.

"Hi." Vanessa said.

Emily left the pair alone. Once Emily was out of earshot Vanessa went to Elenore and crouched down.

"I figured you needed some clothing. We couldn't find anything but your uniforms." Vanessa said handing Elenore the blouse and skirt.

"Thank you Miss Vanessa." Elenore said a low tone as put on the blouse and skirt.

"You're welcome. Margaret told me that you've been having bad nightmares. So what's going on?"

"I've been seeing myself in coffins and morgue slabs, among other things."

"That's understandable considering what's happened. But the doctor now knows that you've had a near

death experience and you were injured and revived by doctors. So you can talk about it if you need to."  
"Thanks."

"You're welcome. Oh we found a key with a red sticker with number 24 on it. Where does that key go to?"

"Please Miss Vanessa. I don't want anyone I love get hurt. If anything should happen to me there's an envelope under my mattress. In it is a key and the number of a safe deposit box. Take the key to the National Bank near the estate and take the contents to the police." Elenore said with some desperation and genuine concern in her voice.

"What's in the box? Please tell me."

"The truth..."

"What truth?" Vanessa asked in confusion.

"I don't want to talk about it here." Elenore said with her eyes darting around the room. Vanessa leaned closer to Elenore. "At least tell me where the key with the number 24 on it goes to. Please."

"I don't want you or Miss Margaret involved."

"I think it's too late for that."

"What? Why?" Elenore asked in suppressed horror.

"Elenore, if strange men are coming here pretending to be your relatives, it's a good chance they know where you and Margaret live as well."

Elenore thought a bit then replied.

"It's the key to a rented room at 201 Blanc Street."

"That's a odd area what are you doing down there?"

Elenore looked at Vanessa sadly.

"Looking for the truth...please Miss Vanessa take Miss Margaret and Laetitia somewhere. Out of the country even."

Vanessa was concerned as she tried to imagine what kind of trouble Elenore had gotten herself into.

"At least could you let Margaret see you? She wanted to be here earlier but she didn't know where this place was. She wanted to at least give you some clean clothing."

"That's okay. I needed to be alone for awhile." Elenore said trying to avoid the topic.

"Alright, I'll go get her. Just care and get better okay?" Vanessa said with a warm smile.

"I will and thank you Miss Vanessa." Elenore said.

Vanessa hugged Elenore and Elenore returned it after a brief pause.

Then Vanessa was escorted back to the lobby to where Margaret and Laetitia were.

Margaret was then escorted to see Elenore.

*Okay, granted I didn't get all the answers I needed. But at least I have an idea...*

Vanessa thought to herself.

Twenty minutes later Margaret came back. She had a look of disappointment on her face.

"What's wrong Margaret?" Vanessa asked.

"Elenore...she wouldn't really tell me anything."

"Well we'll talk about that on the way home."

"Okay." Margaret said as they left the hospital.

On the drive home Margaret began to ask.

"Vanessa what's going on with Elenore?" Margaret asked hoping that Vanessa would provide an answer.

"First things she's suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. That's causing her to have really bad nightmares. And I think that may have played a major part in her breakdown. The other thing is that Elenore is in some sort of trouble. What exactly I don't know but I have an idea where to look." Vanessa said as she pulled to the side of the road.

"What are you doing Vanessa?" Margaret asked as Vanessa pulled over.

"If I'm going to look into this. I'll need some backup and I know where to get it."

Vanessa pulled out her cell phone and started dialing.

Margaret and Laetitia smiled as they heard a familiar voice.

"It's me..."

### **End of part 3**

### **Part 4 Pictures of Heaven**

Ever since yesterday when Vanessa cleared things up somewhat and the therapist now knew what symptoms what to treat, Elenore was given better accommodations along with added security. The latest session was art therapy session, which meant she given art supplies. She would've liked having paint and canvas but the crayons and paper were more appropriate for she wanted to draw and way she did it.

Emily looked at Elenore's picture and asked. "Where is that place? And who are those people?"

"I know this looks childish, but for a brief time there I was a child again."

"That's okay Elenore."

"To answer your question; it's Heaven and the people with me are my mother and father and my grandpa." Elenore said with some longing in her voice.

Emily noticed that there were two women in the picture other than Elenore.

"Which one is your father?" Emily asked trying not to upset Elenore.

Elenore pointed to the woman in the green dress. "There, next to my grandpa."

The revelation hit Emily like a bolt. "So how do you feel about that?"

"Finding out my father's soul was female was a bit of a shock at first, but I was happy to see her. I really don't remember my father; h...she died when I was two." Elenore replied in the same tone.

"What happened to your father?"

"She was murdered and made to look like a suicide." Elenore said with empathies on the word murdered.

Emily was saddened and a slight feeling of dread when she asked. "What about your mother, was she murdered as well?"

"Yes, she was. She was trying to find out who had killed my father. If is okay with you I would like to go back to my room please." Elenore said with some sadness in her voice.

"Sure. Go and relax."

As Elenore left the room Emily stared at Elenore then at the picture.





Meanwhile Madlax and Limelda had arrived and had settled themselves at Margaret's. After a quick lunch of pasta Madlax, Vanessa, Limelda and Margaret sat in the living room and planned their next course of action.

"For the time being Elenore is safe at the hospital. We have two clues to what is going."

Vanessa began.

"You mean those keys?" Margaret asked.

"Yes. The deposit box we'll check we need to. We have the key to that room on Blanc Street as well so we'll check there first."

"Oh Margaret are you sure Laetitia is be okay at that day camp?" Madlax asked.

"She'll be okay. I wanted her out of harm's way." Margaret replied.

"What about those men who've been trying to see Elenore?" Limelda asked.

"We know what they look like. So after we visit that room we'll see if we can find those men and find out why they're after Elenore."

"Sounds like a plan to me. Let's go."

Madlax said and the four headed out the door.

**End of part 4**

## Part 5 Noir et Blanc

The four of them arrived to 201 Blanc Street. The building looked well kept as they went inside. They were all expecting the interior to be run down but they were surprised that it looked even better kept than the outside.

"So which room is Elenore's?" Margaret asked.

"Number 24 and from the looks of it up a few flights of stairs." Vanessa said as they headed toward the stairs but they stopped when they heard a woman's voice behind them.

"Excuse me. May ask where you coming to see? You don't look like any of you live here."

The woman said in a quiet yet firm tone. They turned around to see a Japanese woman in her late thirties with short hair and as tall as Margaret wearing a white sundress.

"We're here to go to Elenore's room ma'am." Margaret said which got a shocked reaction out of Madlax, Vanessa and Limelda.

"I don't know if she's home. I haven't seen her in awhile." The woman said.

"She's in the hospital and there are some men after her as well." Margaret said shocking the trio. The woman nodded her head then moved closer to Margaret.

"I've seen you before. May I ask what your name is?" The woman asked.

Margaret smiled as she answered. "My name is Margaret Burton."

The woman smiled in return. "I see. I am Kirika Yuumura, co owner of this rooming house."

"Ma'am how do you know me?" Margaret asked curiously.

"Follow me please." Kirika said and they went to the top floor. There were three rooms, with the numbers 24, 25, 26 respectively.

Near a window were two easels with a canvas on each. The first canvas had a pleasant river scene. The subject on the other canvas surprised them; it was none other than Margaret.

"Did you paint that?" Margaret asked in shock.

"No. Elenore did. I've been giving her lessons. For an amateur she's quite good."

"Excuse me Miss Yuumura." Vanessa interrupted.

"Yes?" Kirika asked.

Vanessa pulled out the photo of the two men who were trying to get to Elenore and showed it to Kirika.

"Have you seen these two men?"

Kirika looked at the photo closely.

"Yes, they were asking for Elenore. These do not look the sort of people she would associate with. May I ask a favor from you?"

"Sure, what is it?" Margaret asked.

"When next you see Elenore, please tell her that sometimes seeking the truth carries a high price. I do not wish to see share the same fate as her parents."

"Wait a minute? You knew Elenore's parents?" Vanessa asked in surprise.

"Yes I do. Her father was a good friend of ours."

"To be honest, Elenore never talked about her parents to any of us." Vanessa said still a bit surprised.

"I'm sure she has her reasons for doing so. Here's is her room. Please make it quick..." Kirika said as she headed toward another flight of stairs.

"That was abrupt." Madlax said as Vanessa went to the door and unlocked it....

Vanessa opened the door and turned on the lights. She expected the room to be ransacked or at signs of a break in. Both Madlax and Margaret got the feeling that Miss Yuumura prevented that.

The room was a direct contrast to Elenore's room at Margaret's. Oh, it was neat and tidy but it had more "life". There was a trio of teddy bears on the bed, a writing desk with a laptop sitting on it. The laptop had various gay pride stickers on it. There was poster of the cast of Bee Train Fan on the wall.

Vanessa opened the closet and saw there were several outfits as well as a black trench coat and a red

evening dress in there. There several pairs of shoes various styles as well.

At first they didn't think they were in Elenore's room till they saw the picture of her and Margaret in their swimsuits on the dresser.

Margaret looked at all this with some confusion and sadness.

*"Did she feel that she had to hide this away from me? Why?"* Margaret thought dejectedly to herself.

Vanessa took a few outfits out and placed them on the bed. Then she looked in the dresser and was kind of shocked to find; several sex toys, sappy unsent love letters to Margaret, underwear, and with some checking a photograph of a trio of women and a well dressed man. Margaret began reading the letters while rest looked at the photograph.

The photograph was from twenty years ago. They recognized Kirika from the photograph and the writing on confirmed it. The writing on the back was starting to fade but it still could be read.

*"Kirika, Mireille, Elenore and Douglas at Wangdoodles 82' "*

They surmised that Mireille was the blond next to Kirika, Douglas had black hair and blue eyes with a slightly feminine build to him.

"Elenore" had sharper features to her and resembled the Elenore they knew.

"That looks like Elenore but older and reminds me of Elenore's father." Margaret said innocently. That statement hit Vanessa like a shock as the image of Eli Baker obituary came back to her mind. She was going to say something but she felt that this should between Elenore and herself.

She put the photograph in her purse and turned on the laptop. The desktop was different as well. It was obviously Photo shopped. It had Margaret in casual clothing standing to Elenore who was dressed differently and with a wide smile on her face.

Elenore was wearing a white blouse with a pinstripe vest and a tie with a short black skirt along with her usual socks and loafers.

Vanessa smiled; that would be another thing to bring up with Elenore the next she saw her. She looked on the desktop and saw that program icons were arranged like a shrine around the pair. There saw two icons that caught her attention.

The first one she clicked on was a picture of a man titled "The real Douglas Hayward" It was the same man that was in the photo.

The second was another picture but of a different man but with a caption attached to it. The man had gray hair and looked like Friday Monday. The caption read "Douglas Hayward. He looks like that mad man in Gazth-Sonika. This is not Douglas Hayward. What happened to him?"

Vanessa took out flash drive and made copies of the pictures. Then she turned it off.

"Someone's coming and by the sound of it two people. Wait a minute where did Margaret go?" Madlax said as she just noticed that Margaret was no longer in the room though the letters were piled neatly on the bed.

Vanessa took the laptop with her as they collected Elenore's clothes and went out of the room. There they saw Margaret talking to Kirika and a blond haired woman which they recognized as "Mireille" from the photo.

Vanessa approached the pair and handed the laptop to Kirika.

"Please keep this safe. This is Elenore's."

Kirika handed the laptop back to her. "It's hers, give it to her."

"So you're Elenore's friends. Maybe you can knock some sense into her." Mireille said bluntly.

"You are?" Vanessa asked pretending not to know who she was.

"This is Mireille Bouquet owner of this rooming house." Kirika said trying to make for the lack of social graces her partner was demonstrating.

"She's stubborn like both of them. It's going to get her killed. So tell her to lay low for a while." Mireille said in the same blunt tone.

*"Got news for you, she's been there, done that..."* Vanessa thought to herself.

"Could tell us something about her parents?" Madlax asked.

"If she didn't tell you. Then I have no reason to tell you anything either, so mind your business." Mireille said bluntly mixed with irritation.

"We got what we needed to get, let's go." Vanessa said hoping to avoid a confrontation.

"No we haven't, we forgot Elenore's teddy bears." Margaret said.

"I'm sure she would want those as well." Vanessa said as Margaret went to get them after Margaret came back with the teddy bears Vanessa relocked the door.

"Thank you Miss' Yuumura and Bouquet. We'll pass your messages to Elenore when we see her."

Vanessa said and they began to leave. Margaret lingered for a bit.

"It was nice meeting you both. I'm happy that Elenore has more friends." Margaret said as she began to leave.

"You know she's in love with you." Mireille said as Margaret as heading toward the stairs.

Margaret turned her head to look at the pair and said two words in sad tone.

"I know..."

And with that Margaret went down the stairs...

**End of part 5**

## **Part 6The reflection of the twin moons on the water**

"Well that was informative." Madlax said in a sarcastic tone as she and Limelda checked the car for explosives or devices.

"If you mean what they said. I think they're trying to protect us as well as Elenore. I know they know something." Vanessa said.

Margaret was silent as she held the teddy bears close to her.

"Margaret what's wrong?" Vanessa asked noticing Margaret's mood.

"Why Vanessa?" Margaret asked in surprise.

"Why what?" Vanessa asked in confusion.

"Why did she feel she had to hide that from me? I saw the pictures and read those letters. It was like seeing a different Elenore. She looked really happy in those photos."

"You can ask her yourself."

"Huh?"

"You and I are going to talk to Elenore while Madlax and Limelda go look for those two men. Besides I think we need to confront Elenore on some of this."

"Oh...I forgot."

"We'll meet up back at the estate. Good luck you two." Madlax said as she and Limelda began to leave.

"Same to both of you and good hunting." Vanessa said as she and Margaret got in the car and drove off.

An hour later they were sitting across from Elenore in a private reception room.

Vanessa pulled out the clothes from the bag they carried them in and neatly placed them on the table in front of Elenore.

"I see you've been to my room. I guess now you know." Elenore said resignedly.

"We don't know everything. I have to admit that you look pretty sharp with that vest and tie. But I think you're referring to this aren't you." Vanessa said pulling the photo out her blouse pocket.

"Please allow me to explain." Elenore said defensively.

"Elenore we're not judging you or any of your family, but we would like some answers. Plus Margaret would like a talk with you privately."

"Alright, you're both my friends and you deserve an explanation. When I died I met my mother and father along with my grandpa and grandma. There I saw that my father's soul was female. At first it shocked me but she explained that she still loved me and my mother regardless of gender.

She also told me she was in actuality murdered."

"Why? Because she was transgendered?"

"That was the official explanation that was given but the truth was she murder because she was about to expose someone for murder and identity theft. You see my father knew the real Douglas Hayward and he was a transman.\* Elenore pointed to Douglas in the picture.\* the man my father confronted is cismale."

"You mean the man with gray hair and looks like Friday Monday."

"Yes." Elenore said.

"My mother didn't quite buy the explanation the police gave so she started her own investigation. She also befriended the two other women in the photo. I also learned about them from my mother and father. I contacted them and they gave me the key to my mother's deposit box she gave them."

"Aren't you worried that whoever killed your parents might go after them as well?"

"Actually no...Let's say they have a secret of their own...and it's none of my business."

"Those two wanted you stop investigating."

"They have genuine concern for me, but I need to bring my parents and Mr. Hayward's killer to justice."

"I noticed your father called herself Elenore, were you named because of it?"

"Yes actually. My father was legally named Eli but she liked the name Elenore so she took it and gave it to me as well." Elenore said with a smile then she stopped smiling when she noticed Margaret sitting silently staring intently with a hurt look in her eyes at her.

"I think Margaret needs to talk with you... I'll wait outside." Vanessa said getting up and leaving the room.

Once Vanessa had left the room Margaret spoke with a great of hurt in her voice.

"Why Elenore?"

"Why what Miss?"

"Why hide?"

"Hide what Miss? Please be more specific."

"I saw your room too."

"I see. I assume that you know as well Miss."

"Elenore, I've known."

"Please be more specific Miss, what do you know?"

"I know that you like other girls and...and you're in love with me. What I saw in that room, told there is another side of you. One that wants to live too."

Now it was Elenore's turn to stare.

"Miss Margaret. It's true I do love you and I am a lesbian. But I also work for you and I don't want to see you hurt because of me."

Margaret stood up and looked Elenore in the eyes very closely and said. "And because of me, you died. I love you Elenore and I know doing your job brings you happiness, but I like...no I *want* to see the Elenore who has a small teddy bear collection, wears a red cocktail dress, advocates for the rights of LGBT people, who likes anime and writes sappy love letters to the person she loves. You shouldn't have to hide that Elenore."

Elenore bowed her head and smiled. "I guess your right Miss. Thank you for bringing my bears to me and how did you know I wore a red cocktail dress?"

"Vanessa saw it in your closet along with the other outfits. Vanessa wanted to bring the tie too but she said the hospital wouldn't let you wear it. Can you do me a favor Elenore?"

"Of course Miss, all you need to do is ask and I'll do it."

"Please wear that outfit I saw on your laptop. You know the one with vest and tie and that smile."

Margaret asked with a smile.

"Of course Miss." Elenore said with a smile in return.

On the drive back to the estate;

"Vanessa did the doctor say how much longer Elenore has to stay?" Margaret asked with some anticipation.

"They'll do an eval to see if she can be released tomorrow. Hopefully Elenore can shed some more light on this. But it does explain some of her behavior."

"Huh?" Margaret asked.

"It explains why she's being so mysterious and also I think it's in part a backlash from the trauma of dying and coming back to life. I've had a similar reaction myself while I've been in Gazth-Sonika."

This made Margaret feel guilty, that she had a part in what had and now was happening to two of the people she loved.

But she had no idea how to make it better and hoped that something would come along provide a solution.

"Anyways, now that you know Elenore's feelings for you how feel about it?"

That threw Margaret off a bit as she didn't really give it any real thought. She loved Elenore and Elenore loved her, what else could be really said about it. But what she had read Elenore wanted to pursue a deeper relationship and on closer thought so did she.

"There's a couple of things that need to be ironed out. I'm sure we can fix them." Margaret said with a happy smile.

"Good. Now let's hope Madlax and Limelda got lucky." Vanessa said with some relief.

It took a few hours; an ambush and a small shoot out in back alley but Madlax and Limelda found the men. They were hired thugs working for a Douglas Hayward but they both knew that wasn't his real name. Madlax wondered if he was related to Friday Monday.

Though they didn't know much, other than that the Baker woman needed to be silenced for some reason.

They did (though very reluctantly) gave the location of their bosses office. After tying them up and leaving no clue they did it in a secluded area headed back to the estate.

## **End of part 6**

### **Part 7 Deja'vu Madlax style**

After they all got home and had dinner they sat in the living room.

"So now we where to find this guy, now what do you we do?" Madlax asked.

"Why don't we just give the evidence in the deposit box over to the police and let them handle it?" Margaret said.

"And while we wait Elenore is still a target and I wouldn't doubt any of us will be as well. Best to take this guy out before he can get us." Madlax said in reply.

"This is Nafrece not Gazth-Sonika, you can't really barge in guns blazing and not have people noticing." Vanessa said with a little surprise.

"Hate to say this, but Vanessa is right on this one. Our little shoot out earlier drew some unwanted attention, so I think its best we lay low for awhile. Those two aren't going anywhere at least for now. So let's figure what we're going to do next." Limelda said.

"Well, hopefully Elenore will be able to join us tomorrow and hopefully we can wrap this up." Vanessa said.

Meanwhile back where Madlax and Limelda had tied up the two men. It took them a few hours but they were starting to get loose until they heard footsteps.

The man facing the door saw the hint of blond hair reflected from the light and thought it was Madlax at first but was shocked when he heard the voice.

"Now you two are going to answer my questions. Starting with who killed Elenore Baker Sr. ..."

Holding her teddy bear Elenore stared at the ceiling in her room deep in thought. Margaret had found her room and though she could've been upset about it she was actually relieved. She didn't have to hide that part of her life anymore though she wondered how she was going reconcile both parts. Granted she

enjoyed wearing her uniform and the pride she had in it, she wanted to "live" as Margaret put it too. The moments she spent looking for the truth, learning how to paint from Miss Yuumura, catching up on her Bee Train Fandom, exploring parts of herself she never really had a chance to do so before and having a part of her parents via the room made her happy as well. Then there was the specter of the man who killed them. She knew sooner or later she would have to confront him. She did wonder how she would have to go to end it. Would she need to take one or more lives? Would it cost hers as well? She didn't really want to dwell on that. She shifted her focus and thoughts back to Margaret. With a smile born of arousal she remembered Margaret's request. *"Please wear that outfit I saw on your laptop. You know the one with vest and tie and that smile..."*

A few hours later Kirika was sitting in front of the window in the dark sipping tea. The moonlight was shining into the room stirring up memories when she heard the door open.

She didn't even turn around as she sipped her tea.

"Did you enjoy your stroll?" Kirika asked before taking yet another sip.

"It was quite enjoyable." Mireille answered.

"I was beginning to wonder how long you were going to be out. I left a cup out for you." Kirika said.

"Well I had to take a slight detour but once I got around that it was easy to get to where I wanted to go."

"That's good. Please sit before the tea gets cold." Kirika said as Mireille headed to the table.

The next day Vanessa went to the hospital to see if Elenore was able to be released.

After some words from Emily to have Elenore see a therapist for the PTSD and take a day off once in while Elenore was released.

On the drive home;

"Has anything happened since you and Margaret saw me last?" Elenore asked.

"Not really though Madlax and Limelda did find the two men who were trying to see you."

"So what happened?"

"They questioned them and left them tied up somewhere. They went this morning to check on them."

"I'm actually surprised that they didn't just shoot them. No offence."

"I'm sure that crossed both of their minds."

"So what are they going to do with those men? I mean they can't just leave them tied up forever."

Meanwhile;

"Well, I have to admit this does simplify things a bit." Madlax said looking over the bodies of the two deceased men.

"How so?" Limelda asked.

"We don't have to shoot them."

"And you're not concerned about who shot them or ever knew where we had them?"

"Not really. We got what we wanted out of them so if somewhere killed them to keep them quiet then they're too late."

"Okay, that takes care of the first part. But doesn't it worry you that somebody knew where we had stashed these two?"

"Umm...no." Madlax said and Limelda sighed.

Back at the estate Elenore looked in shock as she saw the apartment.

"Elenore, are you okay?" Margaret asked in concern.

Elenore snapped out of it and replied. "I'll be alright once I finish cleaning...if you excuse me please."

With that Elenore went to her room and donned a clean uniform and spent the majority of the day cleaning...

Madlax and Limelda came and informed them of the demise of the two men which concerned everyone except Madlax.

After Elenore had finished cleaning the apartment to her satisfaction she made dinner. Then after they all gathered in the living room to discuss what they were going to do next. "I don't see why we don't just hand what evidence we have to the police." Margaret iterated once again. "Because Miss we don't have enough evidence yet..." Elenore answered. "You know, you can just call me Margaret when we're around our friends or we're alone. You said my name in Gazth-Sonika in that field without any title. I also know you're just being respectful and I appreciate it greatly. I know this isn't really the time to work things out but I would like to start here." Margaret replied. Elenore was shocked at first and then she thought on what Margaret had said. She did call her by just her name in that field and they were among friends who knew about her feelings for her so why couldn't she do it now. "Thank you Margaret, I do appreciate this." Margaret smiled when Elenore said her name, granted she had heard her say her lots of times but always under the title of "Miss". "How much evidence do you have?" Vanessa asked. "I've looked at what my mother had gathered and I really don't think there's enough." "Margaret may have a point; turning in what you have may lead the police to more evidence against him. I know you want to bring the man who killed your parents to justice but I don't want to see a repeat of Gazth-Sonika. It's not like you're going up against Enfant." "I understand your concern Miss Vanessa but..." "But nothing Elenore...tomorrow you'll go down and give the evidence to the police. Somebody killed those men and somebody wants you silenced." "Please Elenore, Vanessa has a good point too. I don't want to lose you again, please..." Margaret pleaded. "I understand Miss Vanessa. I'll bring the evidence to the police tomorrow..." Elenore conceded.

A few hours later Elenore sneaked out the door. *I'm sorry, Margaret and Vanessa. I don't want either of you hurt or killed. I wouldn't be able to forgive myself if that ever happened.* Elenore thought to herself as she looked up at Margaret's window unaware that she was being watched.

"Called it..." Madlax said as she watched Elenore go down the street from the guest room window. "Damn it Elenore." Vanessa said as she too watched Elenore go down the street.

"Stubborn just like your parents..." Mireille said to herself as she watched Elenore go down the street from her vantage point as she pulled out her cell phone.

## **End of part 7**

## **Part 8 Hearts redux**

Elenore had reached the rooming house and found that the front door was locked. "Now where did I put that key?" Elenore said to herself as she looked around the doorframe for the key. "I believe you were looking for this Miss Baker." A smooth but sinister male voice said behind her. Elenore slowly turned around to see a tall man with short silver hair and wearing a pair of glasses and business suit. The man reminded her of Friday Monday and a part of her wondered if was going that nonsense about the "Essence". He was holding what looked like an airport locker key. *Actually that's not the key I was looking for.* Elenore thought to herself. "Who are you really? I know you're not Douglas Hayward." Elenore asked calmly, though a gun was



being pointed right at her.

"For someone staring death in the face you're quite bold. Then so were your parent and look what happened to them."

"So why did you kill my parents and Mr. Hayward?"

"That's *Miss* Hayward and if she didn't associate with that freak that you call a father, none of this would be happening." Douglas said with a slight hint of anger in his voice.

Elenore raised an eyebrow as it began to make sense.

"Now I understand..." Elenore said still calmly.

"Understand what? Understanding that you're about to join your parents. Is that what you're saying?"

"No. I realized why; you were in love with Mr. Hayward and didn't like the fact he was transitioning so acted like so many transphobes act; you killed him. Realizing that you killed the person you were actually in love with, you stole his identity. There was one slight problem; you ran into a person who knew him; my father and she was going to expose you when you killed her."

"Let me guess you're one of those "I love you just as you are kind" of people. If you thought I was transphobic you should've heard your mother before I killed her. She honestly thought I dressed up her husband up like that when actually the freak did dress like that."

"*That's not what my mother said...* Elenore thought to herself figuring out what "Douglas" was trying to do.

"I see, well at least you're not spouting that nonsense about the "Essence of mankind" or what not."

"Wait, you've met him. How do you know him? Are you working for him?" Douglas said and he pulled the trigger.

Elenore knew she couldn't dodge the bullet not at point blank range, so she resigned her to her fate hoping with her death that Margaret and the others would be safe. Just as the bullet was about to hit another bullet knocked it out of the way.

"Oh, so you are related to Friday Monday. I was wondering about that? So is your name Saturday Monday or Sunday Monday?" A familiar and very welcome voice said.

Both Douglas and Elenore turned to see Madlax standing there pointing her gun at Douglas.

"Madlax!?" Elenore exclaimed.

"Madlax? You're Madlax?!" Douglas said in surprise and pointed his gun at her.

Firing off a shot that Madlax easily dodged, he began to run off knowing that the tables for now had turned.

Madlax fired off a shot to wound him. The shot hit him in the right arm as he ran.

Madlax went to Elenore to see if she was okay.

"He's not getting very far. You know that was stupid of you to do that." Madlax said to Elenore.

"I know it was stupid but I didn't want anyone I love get hurt or killed because of me."

"It's okay, I have nothing against stupid people. Some of my best friends are stupid. But seriously Vanessa and especially Margaret are pissed with you right now."

"I can imagine. I think it would be best if I stay here for the night...of course I have to find the key I hid." Elenore said dejectedly.

"Oh you mean this key?" A woman's voice spoke and Mireille came out from the shadows.

"Hello Miss Bouquet. I can..." Elenore said sheepishly.

"I keep telling you girls not to leave the key to the front door where it can be found so easily. I'll let it slide this once, as we need to get you inside."

"Yes Miss." Elenore said as Mireille unlocked the front door and Elenore went inside.

Mireille stopped in the doorway as to prevent Madlax from coming in then she turned to Madlax.

"You did that on purpose didn't you? Took a big risk there..." Madlax said.

"Just go home and tell her girlfriend that she's safe. We'll keep her here and she can come and get her in the morning." Mireille responded a bit surprised that Madlax figured it out so quickly.

"Alright...just tell Elenore I said good night." Madlax said as she began to walk away.

Mireille watched Madlax walk off into the night and then she closed the door and made a bee line to Elenore who was going up the stairs.

"Are you trying to get yourself killed? If you are, I know of far better ways to do it." Mireille said trying to mask her concern.

"No Miss."

"You got lucky, very lucky tonight. I want you to know that."

"Yes Miss."

"Now go to your room..."

"Yes Miss." Elenore said continuing to go up the stairs.

"Elenore..." Mireille said and Elenore stopped.

"Yes Miss?"

"That was good detective work there."

"Thank you Miss."

"Go on..." Mireille said shoos Elenore up the stairs.

Once Elenore was safely in her room Mireille went upstairs to her flat.

Inside she started to make a pot of tea. While the kettle was heating up she went and sat down. She stared at a picture of two women standing next to a younger version of Kirika and herself.

"You know Alyson and Elenore; your daughter takes after the both you. At least this time I can do something..." Mireille said as she pulled out her cell phone.

As "Douglas" stumbled into the office trying to fight off the pain.

"That could've gone better. I should've shot the little bitch right there and then the moment she showed up."

He fumbled for the lights but found that they weren't working.

"Thursday Monday..." A woman's voice said from behind him.

He strained to see who said his name and saw the outline of a small woman in the pale moonlight.

"Who are you?" Thursday said trying to reach for the gun that was lying in the street where he dropped it running from Madlax.

"Noir."

"That's impossible! Noir disappeared years ago!"

A couple shots from a silenced Berretta M1934 and Thursday Monday lay on the ground in a position not unlike his father in Gazth-Sonika.

Kirika looked at Thursday. "This should've been taken care of twenty years ago when Douglas disappeared..." Then she quietly left the room and into the night.

Mireille had just finished pouring herself a cup of tea when the lights went out and the moonlight flooded in. She didn't even bother to look behind her.

"Perfect timing...I trust you've found what you were looking for." Mireille said as Kirika went to the table and poured a cup of tea for herself.

"Yes I did, though it took longer than I expected. I take it that she's downstairs."

"It seems that Alyson's hunch was right after all."

"You can fill me in later. Right now I want to sit and enjoy the moonlight." Kirika said as she began to sit down.

The next morning Elenore looked at herself in the mirror and straightened out her tie. If she was going to get reprimanded at least she might as well dress comfortably. As she put on the pinstripe vest there was a knock at the door.

Wondering who it could be she cautiously asked staying away from the door and the window. "Who is it?"

"It's Margaret." Margaret said from the other side.

Elenore took a deep breath and opened the door.

"Good morning Miss." Elenore said with her head bowed.

"I thought we took of that yesterday Elenore."

"I assume that you are not pleased with me for last night."

"I was upset that you went off and almost got killed. But I'm glad that you're alright. Please do not *ever* do that again."

"Yes Margaret. But I still have to turn in that evidence to the police."

"Oh, Vanessa did that this morning. She went down to the bank as soon as it opened and got the evidence. Then we gave it to the police. Oh that reminds me; Vanessa wanted to talk to you later before she left for Gazth-Sonika." Margaret said without a worry.

"I'm sure she does." Elenore said imagining what Vanessa would say to her.

For a few moments both of them stood there looking at each other wondering what the other was going to do next when they heard Mireille's voice echoing from upstairs.

"Don't just stand there looking stupid, kiss her for God's sake."

"Okay." Margaret said and she hugged Elenore in a loving embrace and kissed her.

Elenore knew that Mireille was most likely watching her morning soaps but the timing was nice as was Margaret kissing her. She returned the loving embrace and kissed Margaret.

Kirika walked by, noticed the pair and smiled as she went down the stairs.

A few days later Vanessa left along with Madlax and Limelda back to Gazth-Sonika but not before chewing out Elenore. They also found out that "Douglas" real name was Thursday Monday and he had been shot two more times in the head and heart along with the wound that Madlax gave him.

Elenore and Margaret visited Elenore's parents grave and on the way out of the graveyard they ran into Carrossea.

"Hello Miss Margaret, what a coincidence running into you here."

"Hello Carrossea. How are you?"

"Quite fine, thank you. I'm going to be in town a few days and was wondering if you would like to go out for dinner sometime."

Holding Elenore's hand Margaret replied. "I'm sorry, but I'm spoken for but thank you for the offer."

Noticing Margaret holding Elenore's hand Carrossea asked. "So what's your relation with Miss Baker?"

Elenore annoyed with Carrossea replied. "Who are we to each other?" I don't think that's any of your busi-  
\_"

With a smile Margaret answered. "We're life partners."

Carrossea was a bit surprised as Margaret led an equally shocked Elenore away still holding her hand.

Elenore turned her head and saw that he was still standing still Elenore shot Carrossea a very pleased smile and the look of utter satisfaction on her face as she and Margaret continued to walk away...

**End...**