

Chapter 31. The Third Moon Rising

Outside the Manor a force of forty mercenaries stood milling around. An hour ago they engaged Altena's forces. They lost a quarter of their number but they won out. But inside they were encountering resistance and every ten minutes or so another small group would go inside.

Now it was just the forty of them left plus the ten that just went inside. They piled the bodies of the Soldats in an unorganized heap. The only Soldat they left untouched was lying by their commander's order was a young Asian woman dressed in a Nafrecean maid's uniform and wearing a brown wig. She was beginning to smell.

"Hey sarge, why can't we move this one? It's beginning to smell." A mercenary asked his sergeant.

"Because of orders. The commander wants this one left as a message. Hold on..." The sergeant began to say when he saw the huge murder of crows land nearby.

"Go check it out." The sergeant ordered and the mercenary went towards the grove.

When the feathers had cleared Elenore and Madlax had found themselves behind a small grove of trees across from the Manor.

As they got their bearings they noticed the mercenary entering the grove. They hid behind some large trees, and as he passed them Elenore quickly came behind him and then snapped his neck.

"Looks like they noticed us coming in..." Madlax said, first looking at the body then using binoculars surveying the scene.

"More like they noticed the commotion, that's why they sent one to see if he would get shot." Elenore said looking at the scene.

"I count at least thirty five maybe more. Plus there's a pile of bodies nearby and a dead maid in front of the entrance before the stairs." Madlax reported calmly formulating a plan of attack.

"She's why I brought the sheet for...and she's not a maid..." Elenore replied touching Madlax on the shoulder.

Madlax felt a shiver down her spine as the clothes she was wearing changed into the white cocktail dress and red shoes she wore in Gazth-Sonika. The only thing that didn't change was the gun belt around her waist and in a small pouch was her cell phone. When she got over the brief shock, she looked to find that Elenore had gone.

"Where did Elenore go?" Madlax asked before she heard gunfire.

"Oh damn it!" Madlax said as mercenaries poured into the grove.

Madlax dodged from tree to tree shooting any mercenary in sight and range. She thought she got hit a couple times but she noticed the bullets had just flatted themselves on impact.

"So that's what you did. You gave me some kind of armor or something. Where are you?" Madlax said to herself behind a tree as she dodged automatic rifle fire.

Then she rapidly began to shoot every mercenary left standing in the grove. Her attack momentarily stunned them and that gave her the opening she needed and in a few minutes all twenty mercenaries were dead. She could hear more gunfire and started towards it. When emerged from the grove she saw Elenore shooting with rapid and deadly accuracy. She couldn't really run in her heels but she managed to move quickly enough the shoot the mercenaries taking aim at Elenore.

They saw a mercenary go inside the Manor. Madlax looked at Elenore crossly. "Don't ever do that again. I don't want to have to explain to Duvie and Margaret why you got shot." Madlax said in combination of anger, concern and relief.

"Sorry about that. I had to create a distraction otherwise they would've came at us full force and we're pressed for time."

Madlax looked at the pouch with her cell phone in it. "Is it time?"

"No not yet. We still have to deal with those inside."

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Then they looked at the body of the maid lying in front of the stairs leading to the front doors. Elenore removed the wig to reveal that the woman had purple hair. There was a huge bullet hole in the middle of her forehead, her face was covered in bruises and her lifeless eyes stared up to the sky. Elenore closed them shut.

"It's Chloe...what did they do to her?" Madlax grimly asked as she looked over Chloe's corpse.

"Take a look at her hands and knees and you'll see." Elenore said pointing to said extremities.

Madlax looked and saw that hands were nothing more than bandaged stumps and her knees had been shot off.

Then without warning she and Elenore were in the field of flowers that she saw Vanessa in. She was dressed the same way as well. She saw Elenore talking to Chloe who was wearing a pink frilly dress. Baffled on why they were there she walked up to the pair.

Chloe snickered when Madlax approached. "What's so funny?" Madlax asked wondering what Chloe was snickering about.

"Elenore just told me about your conversation with Mireille. I like your opinion." Chloe said with a smile.

"Oh, okay. But what happened to you?" Madlax asked bit confused.

"That jerk had snipers take out my knees and my hands. Once he kept me from bleeding to death he pretty much tortured and then drugging me to tell him where Altena was. After that he let his men have their "fun" with me. Then he had them dress up me as Elenore and he started swearing and slapping me right before he pulled out his gun and shot me. Does that answer your question?" Chloe coolly explained. Madlax was stunned at the deliberate brutality that was inflicted. Then Chloe then turned to Elenore. "Could you please do me one favor when you leave?"

"Depends on the favor, I can't shoot Walter or Altena."

"Wasn't going to ask you that. You did say you were going to bury me correct?"

"Yes I did."

"Could you please tell Kirika where I'm buried at?"

"Yes I will. We have to go now. Good bye Chloe."

Chloe respectfully nodded and walked off into the light and Elenore and Madlax found themselves back in the real world.

A trio of mercenaries came out and both Elenore and Madlax emptied their current clips into them then they reloaded and went inside...

Walter surveyed the scene with satisfaction. Though it cost him twenty men in total, he finally destroyed what resistance Altena's forces could muster as he gazed upon the corpses of nuns and Soldat mercenaries. A smug smile crossed his face as he readied his gun and started towards the room where Altena was holding up when he heard shooting from outside.

A mercenary rushed up to him.

"Sir we're under attack!"

"By who and how many?" Walter asked wondering if Three-Speed and Nafrece Intelligence or another Soldat faction was attacking.

"Two women, Sir." The mercenary replied.

"You're kidding me right?" Walter asked angrily.

"No Sir. One is dressed in a maid's uniform and the other in a white cocktail dress."

Walter restrained himself from smacking the mercenary silly.

"What the hell am I paying you for?! Go shoot them before I shoot you!" Walter said angrily.

The mercenary ran down the hall and back outside where he got shot upon exiting the Manor.

Walter and a couple of mercenaries went down the hall and bashed the doors open.

Altena shot the mercenaries as they came in and missed Walter entirely as he dodged and opened fire using the corpse of one of the mercenaries as a shield.

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Both Altena and Walter stopped firing at each other as they heard yelling and then rapid pistol fire then dead silence. Then they heard the sound of a woman's footsteps coming closer. The doors flew off as by some unseen force and walking in was Elenore with her guns holstered and her glasses on.

Altena looked at her in shock. "You can't be her! I shot you! You're dead!" She uttered in surprise. Walter was surprised at first but he remembered that Elenore resembled her grandmother. As he took aim at Altena an unseen force shoved him and Altena against the wall and disarmed them. They watched in shock as their guns went sliding across the floor to in front of Elenore's feet. Neither of them could move as Elenore moved toward them.

Elenore spoke but it wasn't her voice. Walter and then Altena recognized it in horror as it was the voice of Elenore Baker Sr. "Yes Altena you did shoot me and I am quite dead. But I haven't borrowed my granddaughter's voice to speak with you though she would like to ask you a few questions. –Then she turned her head towards Walter with a furious and disappointed look in her eyes. – As for you young man, I have quite a few words for you as soon as Elenore is done with Altena." Then she gave back control of Elenore's voice back to her.

"Why Altena? Why did you even bother recreating Noir? Do you have any idea of the tragedies you caused?"

"The Soldats have become corrupt. Becoming the very thing they were fighting against."

"I wasn't asking about the Soldats. I was asking about you. I remembered that you said you understood what I went through. You were raped as well weren't you?"

"Yes I was my child. I was younger than you were when a soldier raped me. It was only later that I found out that the soldiers were Soldats mercenaries. I had heard about the legend of Noir and I wanted to use that power to have my revenge. If your grandmother hadn't run away and hidden herself for so long I could've used her power. But the council found out where she was and sent me to kill her. If she hadn't rushed at me I would've not have shot her. But I found you to be an excellent replacement but that damn Marenne did something, what I don't know and I had lost contact with you, and just when you were becoming an excellent sapling."

Elenore sadly looked at Altena in frustration. She knew that Altena wasn't going to give the answers she needed but she continued her inquiry. "Did you care about any of us? Did you see what they did to Chloe?"

"Of course my child I cared. You were going to be the black hands that purified the world..." Altena replied with a smile.

"You didn't answer my other question. Did you see what they did to Chloe?"

"Oh that was Chloe? I thought it was you with the way she was dressed. But then again your uncle is a colossal pervert, isn't he my child?"

"You know don't you?"

"Of course, I knew my child. I knew he was the one who raped you. Didn't you say you wanted revenge against the man who raped you? Well there he is my child. Take your revenge." Altena said slyly.

Elenore unholstered the pistol with Kirika's motto and looked at the inscription written on it and then holstered it with a smile on her face.

"Why are you smiling my child?"

"Because a friend and my sister reminded me of something and I do believe you've heard this as well."

"And that would be?"

"Love can kill but hatred never saved anyone. I believe Kirika said that to you. Now I'm beginning to really understand why Kirika didn't shoot you."

Altena was stunned at first to hear Kirika's name, then she regained her composure. "I see you reunited with her, is she with you my child?" Altena asked wondering if she was nearby.

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“Thankfully no. If she had seen Chloe’s body I think she would’ve shot you and then him. Also thankfully after today you nor or any other Soldat will ever touch any of us ever again. I’m disappointed in a way, I wanted some honest answers out of you but all I got was the perverted dogma you cling to. My grandma wishes to speak with my “uncle” after that you two kill each other to your heart’s content. Because after I leave here I have to save my family. Now I’m done talking with you.” Elenore said then she let her grandma take control of her voice and she walked over to Walter still unable to move. Elenore Sr. spoke to her son in a very heated and disappointed tone. “What you did to our family is inexcusable! Trying to murder Master Burton, framing your own sister and then forcing her to become a killer, manipulating your father and Mistress Anna into helping you with your scheme, then raping your own niece! Then kidnapping the child and then telling Meg that it was another woman’s child all out of petty stupid jealousy! You have NO idea how disappointed in you I am. What saddens me the most is my poor boy died the same day I did and was replaced by the monster I’m looking at now. What have to say for yourself you monster?”

Walter laughed. “Monster? Is that you call me, a monster? Well then I am. You know I looked up to you once...hell I wanted revenge because of you but after seeing the stupid way you died...I changed my mind. Once I kill the whore over there the Soldats will be mine! Oh don’t worry, Meg and the others will be joining you soon enough.” Walter said with an arrogantly evil tone.

Elenore looked at him and reached into a pocket and pulled out a silver pocket watch. She opened and listened to the tune as she read the inscription inside the lid. “This is too good for the likes you monster.” Elenore Sr. said as she closed the lid and was about to draw her gun when Madlax put her hand on Elenore’s.

“Don’t! He’s not worth it. I know your angry but please don’t make your granddaughter kill. Anyway we’re almost out of time.” Madlax showed the cell phone’s timer and there was only two and a half minutes left. “Oh dear, your right. I did promise Elenore I would just speak. You two had better go now.” Elenore said before she gave control back to Elenore.

“Thank you Madlax. Now run to the entrance!” Elenore said when she regained control and Madlax began to run down the hall.

“Well at least I know who is sending those mercenaries to the mansion. I would say goodbye but neither of you are worth it.” Elenore said then she turned around and calmly walked out the room and then bolted down the hall. Midway through she could hear Altena and Walter struggling to get to their guns. A flurry of black feathers surrounded Elenore and then Madlax. A huge murder of crows and ravens burst from the entrance and surrounding Chloe’s body then taking off to the sky only to land a quarter mile away from the Manor.

Madlax was confused. “I thought we were going back to the mansion?”

“We are, but there are a couple of things I need to do. Oh by the way, thank you for short sheeting me on the time.” Elenore said with a smirk.

Looking at Chloe’s body now wrapped in a sheet. “You’re welcome; Kirika did ask me to make sure you didn’t shoot them. And no offence to your grandma, but I had the feeling she was going to regardless.”

“I know and I thank you for stopping her. Now let’s bury Chloe.”

“We don’t have a shovel.”

“Don’t need one.” Elenore said and she pointed her hand at the ground nearby and six feet of earth was excavated and put in a pile nearby. Then she and Madlax lowered Chloe’s body into the ground. After they placed her in Elenore moved the pile of earth to fill in the grave. Then she took a nearby boulder and used the same force to carve out a gravestone.

Madlax found some flowers and put them on top of the grave. Both of them noticed that the sky was growing dark very rapidly.

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“What is that?!” Madlax said pointing to the sky above the Manor. A vortex was opening up and something huge was coming out.

“Shouldn’t we get out of here?” Madlax said a bit frightened.

“We can’t just yet. Susan’s only hope is on that ship. I have to use the ring’s power to help the ship land otherwise it will explode on impact.”

A huge ship resembling two aircraft carriers and a battleship fused together came out of the vortex. Madlax could tell that from the way it was descending it couldn’t pull its nose up in time. Elenore cried out in agony as she stretched out her arms and hands as unseen forces pushed the nose up enough so it wouldn’t hit the ground. The ship crash landed on top of the Manor and on top of Walter and Altena who were still struggling with each other. The impact shook the ground for miles around but the ship was intact.

Madlax struggled to keep her balance as Elenore did the same.

“You okay there?” Madlax asked a heavily breathing Elenore.

While catching her breath she smiled with a very satisfied look on her face.

“I’m fine, but that took a lot of power. You have no idea how much that ship weighs...” Elenore said as she began to recover.

Madlax suddenly looked in the direction of Burton Mansion. “Elenore, they’re attacking! How quickly can you teleport us?”

“They’re using the chaos caused by the ship as cover for their attack. Give me a minute and I’ll be able to teleport us.”

“Okay, but what’s on that ship anyways?”

“The cure for Susan, she has the same disease that killed her sister. For the moment it’s dormant but it could kill her at any time within hours. I lost one child I’m not about to lose another!” Elenore said yelling at the end. She raised her arms and black feathers once again surrounded them as they teleported.

Meg led Three-Speed to the armory where she showed him the stockpile that Walter added to.

“What is he planning to do with all this stuff?” Three-Speed looking over the armory then the invoice.

“Meg, Three-Speed you have up and see this!” Vanessa yelled down though neither of them could see her. Then they got to the top of the stairs Vanessa pointed them to a nearby front window.

“Look up in the sky!” Vanessa pointed out as the vortex opened.

On his walkie-talkie Three-Speed heard Ghost friendly’s voice over it. “Sir, we have movement in the back.”

“How many can you see?”

“About twenty so far.” Then they heard an explosion.

“Ghost what’s going on?”

“It seems they’ve hit one of the Gorgon anti-personnel mines.

Three-Speed saw tour buses pull up in front of the mansion and armed soldiers filing out.

“Those aren’t ours!” Three-Speed said and he tried calling but he found he was being jammed.

“Meg, fire up that generator. Gaston and Limelda start picking off those troops!

Then they all felt the mansion shake as the giant ship crashed.

Vanessa kept her balance and put her hands on the wall. An invisible barrier sounded the house.

“I don’t know how long I can keep it up. But we have to find way to call for help.” Vanessa said.

“Just do your best Vanessa. I’ll go check on Susan.” Margaret said before she went where Susan was.

“Hurry home Elenore and Madlax...” Margaret thought as well not knowing on a telepathic level her message got to Madlax.

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Margaret got to Susan's room just in time pull her away from the window before someone shot at her. "You have to keep down there's going shooting soon." Margaret said guiding her niece to the side of the bed going towards the door.

Susan was beginning to panic as she heard gunfire and the sound of wood being shattered. Margaret used the power of the Torc to calm Susan down enough that she crouched down trying to keep silent.

"Don't worry sweetie nothing is going to happen to you."

"But I want my mommy and my other daddy!" Susan said beginning to cry.

"She's coming sweetie, but you have to stay down. Okay?" Margaret said and Susan nodded and Margaret left the room and rushed to where Limelda, Meg and Three-Speed were fighting the soldiers that burst through the front doors. Vanessa was on the floor trying to keep conscious. "Sorry I tried, but they overwhelmed the barrier. The barrier could hold back arrows but bullets and rockets are a different story. Just give me a minute and I'll be able to use the other powers of the bracelet."

"It's okay Vanessa. When you get your strength back help Meg drive off the jerks in front hall. I've an idea on how to deal with those in the back."

"Watch it Margaret, they have Badgis and the others pinned down."

Margaret carefully made her way where Badgis, Carrossea, Gaston and Ghost friendly were pinned down by gunfire. Margaret closed her eyes and stretched out her hands. She could see the soldiers taking cover behind the fixtures in the back yard avoiding the anti-personnel mines. Margaret concentrated and a few soldiers started shooting the others thinking it was her. She had a few run straight into the claymore mines. Margaret caused enough chaos that Badgis and the others were able to mount a counter offensive. She didn't know if she could drive them off considering she had no idea where they came from, but she could keep who ever was left from entering the mansion.

Three-Speed and Meg were firing down at the front doors, shooting anyone who tried to enter. They heard gunshots from the living room as a couple tried entering through the windows on the ground floor.

"I'm running low on ammo Roy." Meg said as she fired off another burst.

"Same here Meg. I know this is not a really good time, but I've wanted to ask you this for the longest time."

"One of those 'in case I don't make it.' questions?"

"Yeah." Three-Speed answered firing off a burst. Thankfully Margaret slid a few more clips at them.

"Well spit out it then."

"Meg, I love you. Will you marry me?"

Meg stalled as she reloaded. "Yes!" She said excitedly before firing off another burst.

Vanessa had regained her strength and joined Badgis and the others out back. As soon as she saw a soldier she snapped her fingers and the soldier burst into flame.

Margaret meanwhile was concentrating on keeping the soldiers out of the mansion. But she had a hard time overwhelming their greed and fear of Walter.

Margaret and Vanessa stopped concentrating as they felt a presence. Outside the sky turned black as hundreds of crows, ravens and rooks descended upon the back yard. Then they heard shooting.

Once Elenore and Madlax had reappeared in the back yard with the help of the birds as a distraction, began to shoot the remaining soldiers in the backyard.

They used four clips apiece when they had finished. "How many do you have left Elenore?" Madlax asked Elenore looking over the carnage they both had just wrought.

"I have two left in the belt and two loaded."

"It's about time you two showed up..." Vanessa said half jokingly.

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“Sorry about that.” Then they heard an explosion.

“Damn it they’re trying to lob grenades into the mansion!” Vanessa yelled.

“Oh God, Susan. Madlax take the left, I’ve take the right and I’ll meet you in the front yard.”

Elenore said running off to the right of the mansion. Madlax went to the left and she heard gunfire as Elenore shot anyone in her way. Madlax had easier time as the soldiers who went this way ran into the mines making her progress a lot easier.

Madlax turned the corner shooting into the soldiers that were trying to advance. She could see Elenore firing and kicking whoever she could get at.

Elenore fueled by mother’s fury and the ring plowed into the soldiers shooting and dodging with some very impressive gymnastics until she had to reload. She saw Madlax coming from the other side and she made her way towards her shooting all the way. Madlax didn’t do much gymnastics as Elenore did but more of a graceful dance of death as she shot her way to her.

When they reached each other they mocked embraced each other firing the last rounds of ammo at the last four soldiers.

When the fighting had stopped they looked dejectedly at the mansion and the surrounding carnage.

They could hear sirens approach in the distance.

Then Elenore remembered Susan and went into the mansion holstering her pistols and then taking off her gun belt followed soon after by Madlax who clothes turned back to normal.

“Elenore are you all right?!” Margaret said from the top of the stairs.

Elenore bolted up the stairs and stopped in front of Margaret and the others. She handed her gun belt to her mother and then replied. “Yes, I’m alright. I never again want to kill. If you excuse me please...”

Elenore rushed past them and hurried to the room where Susan was. She could hear Susan’s frightened crying. When she came into the room she quickly looked for Susan. She was crouched in the corner by the bed. Elenore got on her knees and opened her arms wide. Susan slowly got and rushed into her mother’s arms. Elenore warmly held her daughter while she cried on her shoulder.

“It’s over sweetie. The bad men will never hurt us again...none of them will...” Elenore said as she reassured Susan.

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