

# STORYLINE: EDEN'S LEGACY



Helena gasped and staggered to her knees in the long grass. Her dark hair slipped out of its knot and fell across her face, spilling over the brightly colored kanga given to her by her Guruhi guide. Moonlight transfigured the creature standing before her. She now knew why he was called "The Perfect." It was not just his immaculate ebony skin and faultless body. In his eyes, Helena saw one who had spent thousands of years in Ba'Hara, who had drunk from the well in the Garden of Sorrows. To see his beauty was exquisite agony. She could only bear to look at the parts of him shaded from the moon by the large Tamboti tree spreading above them.

Helena could not speak. Instead, she offered her inner mind to his gaze, laying her psyche naked at his otherworldly feet, letting him see and know everything she had thought and done. The plans she had made, the events she was about to set into motion - she offered them all to him. "No secrets," they had whispered to her. Now, seeing him, Helena understood, and willingly, with all that she was, she obeyed.

"Please let me belong," she thought. "Oh blessed one, most beloved of the Dark Mother," she begged him in her mind, "grant me protection. Let me belong."

Lucian looked down on Helena, into her, through her... and smiled.

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Just outside of Stockholm, Sweden, in the caves below Skogskyrkogården cemetery, Karsh sat at the head of a huge oak table while several conversations swirled around him.

"Groups ranging from four to twenty. Smash and grab tactics."

"We have so little information."



"Can't we pinpoint where they will strike next?"

"Well, that is the problem with secret societies. They're secret."

"I thought you Nosferatu were supposed to know everything."

"It was us Nosferatu that linked the abductions to the Groundskeepers in the first place."

"With all due respect, I still don't see how this is a priority for the Camarilla right now. What about Germaine? He's building an army out there. Shouldn't we be dealing with that?"

"The fact that we have no clue what's going on makes it a priority for the Camarilla."

"Have you gone mad? The fact that this could be an existential threat to the sect, to the Kindred, is what makes it a priority!"

It was at the request of clan Malkavian (and, many said, to return the favor of nominating him for Imperator), that one of Karsh's first actions had been to put together a team to gather information on the Mombasa incident and the related abductions.

Oliver Thrace of Clan Tremere stood in front of a screen displaying a map of East Africa. Silence gradually filled the room as the one-eyed warlock spoke.

"We believe the abductions started in Mombasa. A team at an archaeological dig site was taken. Soon after, Kindred later identified by the Nosferatu as members of a secret society called the Royal Order of Edenic Groundskeepers began to disappear all over the globe."

A cell phone on the giant oak table began to buzz. Khalid murmured an apology for the interruption and turned away, lifting the device to his deformed ear.

"What were they digging up?" Karsh asked the Tremere.

"We are not sure, but given the nature of the Order we expect it is a tomb," said Thrace. "The abductions may even be related to a myth regarding the knowledge held by the Order."

Karsh stared at him.



"Supposedly, the society has, scattered among its members, maps to all the resting places of the Antediluvians."

The room once again filled with whispered conversations, groans, and mumbled dissent.

Karsh lifted a finger and all fell silent.

"Sir." Khalid pulled the cell phone from his ear as he spoke. "The one you requested. She's here."

Karsh motioned for Thrace to sit.

Khalid mumbled one last thing into his phone and closed it. A moment later, the door across from where Karsh sat at the head of the table opened and a lithe, dark-skinned woman entered. She was dressed in a simple white sweater and jeans. It wasn't until she got closer that most of the room noticed her cat eyes and tail.

"You are the Camarilla Magaji Karsh." She spoke only to the Gangrel at the head of the table.

"And you are Aisata Swanou, a wise spider," Karsh addressed her. "I am honored by your visit and wish to hear your voice."

Both had the trappings of civilization, yet many around the table felt as though they were watching two animals size each other up.

"You send for Akunanse to tell tales at your fire because you know nothing. I will tell you a story, you who are not of my land. You would do well to listen, and obey."

Karsh nodded respectfully.

"People of your world have come to mine. They take what is not their own. They insult the old and corrupt the young. They offend the land. Is it war you want, warlord?"

"No. It is to avoid war that I have sent for you. I want to know what you want."

"Take back your vermin. Your secrets are your secrets. Our secrets are ours. Those of us who leave



our world and tread wrongly in yours are retrieved and punished. We expect from you the same. You spit on us if you do nothing." Her leopard-like tail twitched.

Karsh stood and put his hands on the table in front of him. "Your people are the keepers of your land." He spoke gently, as though the two of them were the only ones in the room. "You allowed outside claws to scratch in your dirt and now all the vermin of the world are scurrying to your home to see what those claws found."

For many members of the room, this was the longest continuous speech they had ever heard from the Gangrel's mouth.

"The vermin come from my people," Karsh continued, "but it is your people who let them in."

Aisata snarled.

"And because of this," Karsh leaned forward on the table, "it is only with the help of your people, that I can drive them out."

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**I** can't believe I'm doing this," Yvette whispered. They were in the basement of a church outside of Lisbon.

"I can't believe I haven't killed Germaine yet. That ass-licking Cam jerkoff," Jack Drake snarled in his corner of the rough stone room.

Yvette sat huddled in the opposite corner next to Phineas. The last months had been surreal. They had followed Germaine on his world tour, celebrated like crazy when they thought he would win, and raged hard when the prize was stolen. That's when things got really nuts. Anarchs and wannabes starting showing up in real numbers and taking to the streets. All of them wanted to be near their hero, and the "old gang" got pushed out.

That was when she met Drake. That was when she told him about about the cult, and rituals, and prophecies, and the creepy Seraph who seemed to be pulling the strings. Drake didn't like it and went straight at Germaine with it. Yvette was pretty sure that meeting didn't go well. She was pretty sure that was why they had all been sent to protect, of all things, a Sabbat vampire.



Phineas called the inhabitant of the giant gold-veined marble box they were guarding, "the princess who begged for the lives of the poor." Germaine had said her name was Vasantasena, that she was one of those elders who actually gave a rat's ass about the younger generations. Drake wasn't buying it. Yvette wasn't sure she did either.

Glass shattered in the church above. They heard gunfire and shouts. Screams. An explosion. Silence.

The Anarchs fingered their weapons. Yvette shrunk even farther into the corner and clutched her Desert Eagle, trying to stop her hands from shaking as she pointed it at the only entrance to the room.

Something rumbled deep below their feet.

"What is that?" she whispered. "It's like they're... traveling through the stone."

Drake looked over at her, his eyes wide. "Away from the walls!"

The wall to Yvette's right crumpled and a stone hand reached through the rock. A new door swung back in on itself and they all opened fire on the monstrous gargoyle that came through.

"Behind you!" Yvette screamed, firing back at the original doorway.

A huge pierced and tattooed black man was running toward her. He sidestepped her bullet and kept coming. She fired again. He shifted and kept coming. Over and over she pulled the trigger as he got closer, until he stood inches in front of her gun. As the Laibon moved to strike her, green liquid slithered out of his wrist to coat his fingers.

Before the hand could reach her, crazy-eyed Phineas tapped the side of the man's head with the tip of his index finger. The black vampire toppled over in a coma.

Yvette turned to thank Phineas only to see him thrown across the room by a thing that looked part woman, part spider. The monster then turned towards her, its hairy spider-fangs dripping with venom.

The lid of Vasantasena's stone coffin flew up and squished the spider-thing against the wall. One of the Laibon shouted and started toward the woman in the stone box. The beautiful Indian vampire sat up and tilted her head.



Little whispers began to mumble beside Yvette's ear. Yvette turned. The walls became purple and began to pulse in time with the voices. The vampire running toward Vasantasena fell to his knees, tearing at his eyes, screaming. Everything started moving very slowly.

Yvette tried to speak but her tongue turned into a toad and fell out from between her lips, jumping away between the legs of a hyena who was roaring as it charged Drake. Drake was pulling the trigger of a shotgun. There was an explosion. Shrapnel flew everywhere. The hyena jumped.

Phineas grabbed Yvette's arm and screamed in her face, "We have to get out of here. Now!"

His words became fourteen blue-green butterflies. His eyes were cloves, like her mother had put on the Christmas ham when she was five. Then the world turned sideways and blurred out of existence.

Drake shook her awake. Yvette was lying on the beach, Phineas' hand in hers. Phineas was not attached to his hand. She stared numbly at the severed wrist. Above them, the church was in flames.

"It's just you and me." Drake stood.

She looked up at him, dazed.

"It was a setup. We weren't supposed to make it out alive. Come on."

Yvette tried to stand, but fell.

Jack Drake sighed. He leaned down, picked her up, and slung her over his shoulder.

"You're pretty young. Ever hear of the Jyhad?" He talked to her as he walked up the beach. "There's some kind of power play going on right now, and we just became expendable. I don't know about you, but I don't much like being discarded."

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Vasantasena was bound hand and foot, as well as blindfolded. She was tied to a chair in the middle of a room. The gentle rocking motion told her she was on a ship.



"A tower is only as strong as the material from which it is built, my lady. You should have chosen better stones. Do not be too upset, Maharani, I have found it is a common problem among secret societies these days."

Vasantasena stiffened. "You become overly bold, Yazid. Such actions gather attention. And why the Laibon? Are you not including the other Seraphs in your little private purge?"

Yazid chuckled. "The Laibon greatly prefer bringing people to their continent themselves, rather than having them delivered. The Guruhi actually believe they are the land, so really, I just sent the land to you... with a few friends."

Vasantasena wrinkled her nose in contempt.

Yazid grinned. ""Now, we can proceed in the method that is polite, or the method that is impolite. It is your choice, beautiful one. Either way, you will tell me what I want to know."

"So the Black Hand can attempt to extinguish the Antediluvians? Is that what you're after? Insane. You may have infiltrated the Order, but we have all taken precautions in case such an exposure should happen."

"So frustrating, the life of a gardener. Putting in all that work only to have thieves steal your fruit."

"Some things must remain secret. You will not succeed."

"Ah, but you see, I have brought you to Mombasa. There is someone here I'd like you to meet. In Swahili, the name Mombasa means 'Island of War.' Most fitting."

Vasantasena's blindfolded face clouded with worry. Her voice became a hoarse whisper. "Foolish Seraph, what have you done?"

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