



STORYLINE: EDEN'S LEGACY



THE AFTERMATH

Lucinde had the driver drop her off four blocks away from the target. She approached on foot. Her long velvet gown was out of place for the neighborhood but she didn't expect trouble from the locals. The streets were quiet at this hour of the night.

The apartment came into view. Lucinde looked up and saw a single dim light illuminating the third floor window. Her attention shifted as she saw a man, large and dark, step from the shadows to stand under the street light. He pulled the sawed-off, pump shotgun from beneath his leather jacket and lifted it in a relaxed but ready one-handed grip. The wide barrel rested on his shoulder.

His white eyes peered out from beneath the black baseball cap, challenging her as she came closer.

"Archon Bell, fancy meeting you here."

"There's nothing fancy about it. We're both after the same thing." Theo Bell nodded his head in the general direction of the apartment behind him.

"I wasn't aware you would be joining me this evening. But I welcome your company. You can watch the back and other points of egress. I'll go in the front."

The archon didn't move.

"Is there some problem Mr. Bell? Our instructions are quite specific."



"Yeah. There's a problem. You could say that. What were those instructions again? Clean up the mess. Destroy the evidence. Pretend there's nothing to worry about. I don't play that game any more. And you're so busy getting your asses kicked by the anarchists, Africans, and Sabbat licks you haven't even noticed nobody else is playing along either. You think the Malks are turning over what they got out of the Order? How about the Toreador? The few scraps of information they've got are going right into their pockets. Sure. I've got some problems with our instructions."

"Our orders come directly from the Emperor."

Theo snorted. "The Emperor and I have kind of an unspoken understanding. He doesn't give me orders. I'll try not to shove another stake through his chest and toss him off another pier. Or didn't you hear about the Sao Paulo incident? Your warlord is in thick with slavers and demon worshipers. Of course, seeing as he's all loyal to the Camarilla and its fine founders... maybe Karsh was just following orders...."

Lucinde stepped in and waved a gloved finger in his face. "You little whelp. Hardestadt would never betray the Camarilla. Never. And who do you take your orders from then? Ilyanova? Are you so naive that you think her little cult isn't in league with the infernalists? You, of all people, should know what we are up against. You are toying with forces that are far beyond your ken. What do you think is going to happen if you hand those deluded fools exactly what they've been looking for? What do you think they'll find in those tombs?"

"I don't know where this trail leads. But instead of destroying it, I'm going to follow it." Bell stepped back and lowered the shotgun, pointing it at Lucinde before turning around. "You should stay out of my way."

Lucinde watched the Brujah head towards the apartment door. She didn't try to follow him.

The sparks from the bonfire leapt towards the stars, reaching upwards and fading away. Most of the gathered Kindred stayed far back from the bright flames. They let the kine deliver the piles of books and papers and dump them into the fire. They carried computers, hard drives, and rolls of electronic tape. These things contained the results of centuries of research and were the fruits of weeks of fierce struggle around the globe. These too were dumped onto the pyre. The melting plastic hissed and crackled, sending off an inky smoke and a terrible stench.

Elizabeth Conde stood near the fire. She didn't mind the heat, the smell, or the flames. She held a



notebook and ripped out the pages, one by one. Each page was covered top to bottom with words written in neat, obsessive hand. Elizabeth remembered the author. She remembered the small Nosferatu, trapped forever in the deformed body of a young girl. The little monster had wept red tears when she realized the Laibon had found her hidden trove in a basement in rural Wisconsin. The Nosferatu did not resist when Elizabeth drained her and sent her to her final death. Elizabeth examined each page before feeding it to the fire.

She felt a presence beside her and turned. She was startled by the massive form of the Magaji. The serpents of gold and silver wrapped around his powerful form glistened in the flickering light. Eze, the Demon Prince, turned towards her. She had never been so close to one so great. She dared not speak. It was not her place to address him.

His voice was a deep baritone. "You have done well. I will reward you. The betrayers and trespassers that follow Lucian continue to trouble me. They do not respect our tenants. We will find them wherever they hide and destroy them. Rest now." He laid a hand on Elizabeth's shoulder and looked into her eyes. "I am counting on you. Soon the battle will begin again. The secrets must be kept."

When she awoke, Dmitra Ilyanova was disappointed to find that the rest of the bed was empty. She looked up and saw Helena, who had pulled back the heavy curtain and stood by the window. Dmitra climbed out of the vast bed. She went over to Helena and put one hand on the white curve of her hip. Dmitra touched her lips to Helena's perfect shoulder and neck. The two of them looked out at the orange and purple sky illuminated by the setting sun behind the Carpathian mountains.

Helena spoke. "Where do we stand?"

"Is that how it is with you? Last night you were all pleasure. Tonight you are all business?"

Helena stiffened slightly. "We have a lot of business to discuss. And, unlike so many others, we shall have an eternity to attend to our pleasures."

"I think our business will please you as well. The last members of the Royal Order of Edenic Groundskeepers have been located and their secrets are now ours. Their trove is beyond what we imagined. We're still sifting through what we have, but they found the precise locations of dozens of havens, tombs, and resting places. The Brujah and the anarchs served us well. It's amazing what they can accomplish with a little leadership and a cause to rally behind."

"How about Yazid? Was he true to his word?"



Dmitra purred in Helena's ear. "He was. It was easy to get the Sabbat packs working to find the Antediluvians. They turned what they found over to the Black Hand. The Black Hand turned it over to us."

"And the Laibon? I am told that not all of of them chose to follow Lucian."

"That is unfortunate for them. But true. The Magaji Eze was able to organize them. And they proved capable of operating effectively well outside their traditional domains. They were able to get to some members of the Order before we did. And they are quick to destroy what they find."

"How much did they destroy?"

"Not enough. We have what we need. I promise you. We will find those who took the Mother's children so long ago. We will destroy them where they rest. She will have her revenge. Tremble, O you childer of Caine. Tremble, O you children of Seth. Mother is coming. Mother is here. With her lessons of madness. And hands full of blood. She comes to make the world anew. And her chariot is pain and horror."

Helena reached back and ran her fingers through Dmitra's thick dark hair. Dmitra pulled her close.

"Ahi hay Lilitu."

"Ahi hay Lilitu."

END