

Bradford II – Badlands

Chapter 9 – The Watchers

“The card said his name was Wayne Jones and that he was entitled to practise law in three of the New Nations, including San Pablo. Dimitri was probably paying someone on the front desk, to call his lawyer if the cops showed up.”

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Gillian McBride had listened to Bradford talking about the people he saw at times of great stress and it didn't worry her that much. She'd heard similar stories from special operations troops, who'd served a tour of duty in a particularly dangerous warzone. There were many similarities in the stories told by soldiers, who'd never met or shared their experiences. To her it meant that the mind played the same tricks on different people. The problem was getting Bradford to accept that.

“There is a whole Angel cult Bradford.” She said. “If the mind finds something is intolerably stressful, it invents a protector. You see quite ordinary watchers, though I've talked to soldiers who've seen Angels with wings and shining robes, the works.”

Amoe hadn't liked much of the conversation, glaring at her and squeezing Bradford's hand. Families often did blame her, as if she was responsible in some way, for the mental problems of their loved ones.

“No Gillian, I know what I see is real.” Said Bradford. “I did once think I was going crazy, but not now. How would I have known there were assassins waiting in the car park ?”

Tamara exchanged a look with her, she'd taken notes during some of her discussion with other military personnel, who'd been helped by LabSync4. Perhaps helped was the wrong word, they'd been altered and adjusted to make them better fighters. Bradford was different though, his augmentations and DNA alterations were unique.

“I've heard so many troopers say much the same thing.” Said Gillian. “You're a professional Bradford, a veteran of urban warfare at quite a young age. Your unconscious mind takes in a lot of signals, too many for your conscious mind to process. Add on the alterations to how you handle reaction times and..... It's you Bradford. Your unconscious mind sees something bad might happen and creates one of these Watchers.”

“He's not crazy.” Said Amoe. “Bradford is the sanest person I've ever met.”

“No one is saying crazy.” Said Gillian. “I've spoken to Bradford after some of his missions, where he's walked into a room full of armed subversives and been the only one to walk out alive. No matter how many augmentations, that is bound to cause battlefield stress disorder.”

“It just feels so real Gillian.”

Ideally he needed a long session of therapy, but she couldn't force him to receive treatment. He was her boss and she was still in hiding, at least in theory. Gillian wasn't proud of herself for doing it, but she needed to offer him something other than the plain truth.

“You've been seeing these Watchers for a long time and it hasn't done you any harm.” She said. “In fact, their appearance at key moments may well have kept you alive. I don't see any real long term harm being caused by these hallucinations, but you need to accept them for what they are.”

“I believe they're real and nothing will change that.” Said Bradford.

“Lots of people believe in Angels.” Added Amoe.

Gillian sighed, knowing that one foot on the slippery slope, often meant no going back.

"Come and see me every time you see them Bradford." She said. "It's important, especially if they begin asking you to do things. Will you do that?"

"Yes, of course I will."

She saw them out of the lab, both of them all smiles and thank yous. They'd be convinced that Bradford was quite sane and that the Watchers were real. It was exactly the opposite result from the right one, the honest one. Tamara was still sat there, looking awkward.

"He needs a full psyche assessment." Said Tamara.

"Bradford will be fine, as long as we monitor his mental state."

"If he was an ordinary operative you'd have asked for him to be removed from active duty." Said Tamara. "The man commanding hundreds of heavily armed troops, is seeing things."

Anger was her first reaction to having her professionalism questioned. Tamara was right though, curse the damned girl.

"I'm sure President Herbert prays to God every Sunday and believes in angels, even if only to keep the voters happy." She said. "Bradford isn't an ordinary operative, he's our boss. We will carefully monitor his actions, for now."

"We should tell someone." Persisted Tamara.

So easy to have one of Bobby's people take care of the problem. Tony wouldn't even blink, if she asked him to make Tamara disappear. Bradford seemed to have a genuine affection for her though.

"Do you like working here?"

"Yes, it's like a dream come true."

"Then keep your fucking mouth shut."

"Yes Miss McBride."

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Allison Emily Chapman really wasn't that pretty, but she had a diary that contained a long list of her past lovers. Yasmine couldn't see the attraction but Chet seemed to be falling for her sexual allure. Every time Allison shifted her position of the sofa, Chet showed an unnatural amount of interest. Strangely Allison seemed unaware of the gift she possessed and in her own words, had dated a lot of 'poverty stricken ugly bugs,' before Dimitri had come along.

"Where did you meet him?" Asked Yasmine.

"At the supermarket of all places. He seemed to be watching me for a while, before asking me out. Me, can you believe it? I was seeing someone, but fuck it, it was Dimitri wanting to know me better."

"You do realise Dimitri is an importer of illegal substances?" Asked Chet.

"Everyone gets their meds through Dimitri in one way or another." Said Allison. "Judges, cops, even President Herbert. Good luck arresting him, you'll need it."

Yasmine knew she was right and that there was little likelihood of Dimitri serving any time for selling illegal meds. Murder was an altogether different thing though and it looked like he'd been involved in the murder of Douglas DeFreitas. Allison was leafing through a rather worn and tatty diary.

"Can I see your diary?" She asked, putting her hand out.

"It's private."

Chet snorting was enough for the diary to end up in her hand. It was twenty years old and well used. Probably bought when she'd been taking adult literacy classes with Jason, the early entries were hard to read. It was really a list of conquests, some even had star ratings next to them.

"Oh dear, poor Jason only scored two stars." Said Yasmine.

"Jason gave in other ways..... He was very supportive."

“Even after you gave him a sexual disease.” Said Chet.

Brutal, but they weren't there to make Allison their best friend. Allison Chapman was actually crying. “I was so naïve then..... Jason was so understanding. I think I still love him a little....How is he, do you know ?”

“I have no idea.” Said Yasmine. “I'm going to assume that meeting Dimitri in the supermarket is a fantasy Allison. Jason introduced you to Dimitri didn't he ? He probably introduced you to a few other men too.”

“Good old Jason, so understanding.....” Said Chet.

Allison had become a rag doll, flopping about on the sofa, while crying like an upset toddler. They had her, she'd tell them everything she knew.

“I'm not a whore.” Said Allison. “No money ever changed hands.... They were just lonely.”

Yasmine knew it might happen, the guy banging on the door and shouting out something which included the word lawyer. The timing couldn't have been much worse though. Allison Emily Chapman actually began to smile and hold herself upright.

“I'll deal with it, keep an eye on her.” Said Yasmine.

Yasmine drew her blaster as she opened the door, aiming it at the forehead of the young man trying to walk past her. They all did that now, stomp past the arresting officer, as though they owned the place. Not with her though, PD489 didn't play by the same rules as the regular cops. The lawyer looked startled, his business card held up in front on him. She took his card, but kept the blaster aimed at his head. The card said his name was Wayne Jones and that he was entitled to practise law in three of the New Nations, including San Pablo. Dimitri was probably paying someone on the front desk, to call his lawyer if the cops showed up.

“This is an investigation involving national security Wayne.” She said. “I am authorised to use lethal force against anyone trying to interfere with my investigation.”

“My client is a Miss Allison Chapman. Is she in this apartment ?”

“Asking for details of my investigation is an offence. I strongly advise you to leave.”

His face changed, the aggression in his eyes replaced with caution.

“Are you PD489 ?” He asked.

“Another question, another offence Wayne. If you don't leave, I will arrest you.”

He wasn't taking chances, merely nodding at her, before heading towards the elevator. Yasmine closed the door and pushed home two internal bolts. It didn't appear to be her lucky day and she needed to finish talking to Allison without any further interruptions. Allison looked shocked, when Yasmine walked in without her lawyer.

“You sent him away ? You can't do that.”

“We're PD489, we can do anything we want.” Said Chet.

“Want to spend a few decades in a cell Allison ?” Asked Yasmine. “No cosy little arrangements to see lonely men then, not until you're old and grey. Tell me everything, every detail about the men Jason told you to be nice to. Tell me what he hoped to learn from their pillow talk ?”

Yasmine had a small recorder, not unlike the one Camila had given to Marie. The memory cards held several days of recorded information and many of the people PD489 interrogated couldn't write their own name. Plus no one could claim a statement in their own voice was a forgery either, which speeded up the eventually trial.

“Hit the green button and tell it all to the machine Allison.” Said Yasmine. “Take your time and give us every tiny detail.”

“I'll need my diary to jog my memory.”

As she handed it over, Yasmine saw a name on a page, with a doodle of a skull and crossbones next to it.

"I see you weren't keen on Chris Dudley?" Asked Yasmine.

"Him! He is the only man to have hurt me in a very long time. There was something about him, some bad sexual hang ups....I refused to see him again and Jason said he'd moved to San Sebastian." There was a slight chance it might not be their Chris Dudley of course.

"Describe him to me?"

"Oriental looking, told me his family was originally from Japan. I remember thinking that Dudley was an odd name for a Japanese guy."

It was him, all roads seemed to be leading back to Chris Dudley.

"Get it all on the machine, everything you remember Allison."

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Marie never did any deliveries alone, despite what her father might think. She'd ended up with two canvas bags full of deliveries, some of them quite valuable. She'd seen Tobias and he'd given her two of the Pastor's security team for the day. Both of them were muscular, tall and best of all, taciturn. They'd grunt their agreement to her instructions, but wouldn't batter her ears with endless small talk. Dan and Praful they were called, though she did get their names mixed up. To get around the problem, she tended to address them simply as guys.

"We've got something heavy and expensive for Julian guys." She barked. "Stay alert."

No one had ever attacked her on her regular delivery runs, but there a first time for everything.

Julian ran one of the oddities of San Pablo, a Lebanese cuisine restaurant and titty bar.

"Just catering for the needs of my clientele." He'd often told her.

Another need of his clientele was hard core porn, imported from New Borongan. There seemed to be nothing they wouldn't do in New Borongan and film themselves while doing it. Her father merely acted as middleman, delivering the recordings and taking a delivery fee. Or more accurately, she usually delivered the porn. Pastor Ivor seemed to think dealing in just about anything was acceptable, as long as the money funded the Lord's work.

"Ahh, more bondage.... Good, my best sellers." Said Julian.

For a gay guy, Julian seemed to have a real knack for knowing what his straight customers wanted in their porn. He'd have the master recordings copied and on sale before nightfall. Marie was always looked after during her deliveries, a long cool drink and some hot nibbles at Julian's. His restaurant was popular, but like most businesses in San Pablo, there had to be a side hustle to pay the bills.

"Never seen the appeal of porn myself." Said Marie. "Sex is definitely not a spectator sport."

"Not now maybe, but a decade or so back.... There were some classic porn films made."

"Sorry Julian, it all leaves me cold."

"You're too pretty and far too young." Said Julian. "Most of my regulars are men who've.... Seen better days, to be polite about it."

Julian made her laugh and she could relax with him. There were no clumsy passes to be avoided with Julian. The Tucker's Town bomb business was running on the screen behind the bar, which made it easy for her to bring it up.

"Terrible business, my father is very concerned about it." She said.

"Yes, that poor woman.... She looked so young."

"And so pretty."

"Yes, so pretty. A terrible thing Marie, truly terrible."

"My father is asking that everyone keeps their ear to the ground, for any information about who might have planted the bomb."

"Odd saying, ear to the ground. I'll listen for anything, but the general consensus is that it was done by a new group of subversives."

An idea was beginning to form in her head, as she saw Dan and Praful, waiting outside by her car. They'd be with her all day, there wasn't likely to be a better opportunity.

"We go back a long way Julian." She said.

"Oh yes, I remember you as a four year old, doing cartwheels through the bar, while I did business with your father."

"I trust you Julian. Please say you'd never betray that trust."

How old was he, late fifties by now ? He patted her hand like a paternal uncle.

"Anything you tell me stays right here, anything." He said. "Not because of your father, but because I look upon you as the crazy daughter I never had."

"I know who planted the bomb in Tucker's Town. I was stupid and became involved with them, though not any more. If my father was to find out....."

He was still smiling and holding her hand, but the twinkle had left his eyes.

"Who are these people ?" He asked.

"They're not terrorists, they're doing it to make money out of property deals. The leader is someone we've all dealt with at some time, Dimitri."

"Honestly Marie ? This isn't a fantasy ?"

"No, I swear. Could you spread the word so people know, the right people Julian ?"

"You want him killed ?"

"Yes. If my father found out and talked to him....."

He kissed the back of her hand and called over one of his people.

"I will take care of this for you." He said. "You must be careful in future though, about who you get involved with."

"I will, I promise."

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Maggie was enjoying herself in Pile o' Bones. She hadn't eaten that well in a long time; everyone seemed intent on feeding her up. She was seriously considering using her knife to make another hole in her belt, to loosen it up a little.

"You're feeding me too much Muriel, my clothes won't fit." She said.

"Bulk up while you can Maggie Kelly, there are always tough times to come, always."

Her full name, few even knew her family name was Kelly and almost no one used it.

"Unless you're going off my cooking ?"

"Never Muriel, I'll cut another hole in my belt."

The apples in the pie had to be out of a tin, but it still tasted good. Maggie dug in with her spoon and enjoyed the wonderful sweet taste. Her mother had been born in the Badlands, as had she. There were family tales though, stories passed down through the generations. The Kelly's had owned a farm before the troubles, a proper farm in a place called Montana. There had been cattle on the farm and orchards with real fruit, the kind you could pick off the tree and eat right away. Now Montana was just a memory, but the dreams of a world with fruit trees remained. There had been a great-great-great-great grandmother somewhere in the past, though she might have been invented by one of her aunts. A perfect mother and wife, who'd made the best apple pie in all of Montana.

"The water leaves an odd taste, but I just add more sugar." Said Muriel. "Not that sugar is always that easy to come by."

"Our water is clean now, Jared fixed it."

Was it supposed to be a secret ? There were about five women in the kitchen, all looking at her as though she'd told them the biggest secret in the world. Roxy hadn't told her not to mention the clean water and Roxy always made sure she knew what wasn't to be mentioned. Like Jared really being Hector, who they were now calling Jared again.

"How did Jared do that honey ?" Asked Muriel.

"With filters from an old bunker. Our water is now clean, smells fresh too."

"The girl's making it up." Someone muttered.

"No, she's a good kid. Maggie never lies, like Milly. Full of shit is Milly." Said Muriel.

Milly was actually in the room, a dark haired girl of about her own age. Milly knew of only one way to defend herself, spread the blame as wide as possible.

"Maggie does lie." Yelled Milly. "She lies all the time, they have no clean water. She's trying to make fools of us."

It didn't matter what people thought about her in Pile o' Bones, she only saw any of them about four times a year. She should have left it all alone and relied on the ladies of the settlement forgetting all about it, before they saw her again. But no, she just had to defend herself.

"I don't lie ! I can prove it."

Pile o' Bones wasn't a big place, but it was all separate small shacks. Maggie had to go outside and walk about twenty yards, to get to where she'd been given a mattress to sleep on. Her water bottle was there, still half full of the wonderful clean water, that smelt so good.

"Where you going ?"

It was Chip, one of the few boys in Pile o' Bones who she actually quite liked. He had a good smile and the way his upper body filled out his shirt, was quite pleasing. She wasn't really in the mood to talk to him.

"I have to fetch something."

"Can I come ?" He asked.

"If you want."

The bottle was a large plastic drinks container, still bearing the name of large store in San Pablo. Used and refilled many times, she'd wrapped it in an old towel to protect it from damage. Plastics had been a global villain once, but being light and lasting forever made plastics useful. It was easier to take her whole pack.

"Do you want me to carry that ?" Asked Chip.

Maggie held his arm for a moment, loving the way his muscles felt hard under her fingers.

"Most likely I'm just going to have a row when I get back there." She said. "Do you want to meet up later ?"

He really did have a wonderful smile.

"Rows can be fun..... And yes, meeting up later sounds good." He said.

There was an old chipped cup on the table in the kitchen, the one Muriel used for adding water to her various recipes. Maggie filled it with the precious clean water in her bottle.

"Drink it, but smell it before you taste it." Said Maggie.

"Why ? What does it smell of ?"

"Everything nice in the entire world."

She saw the look on Muriel's face, as she sniffed the water, before emptying the cup in one go. Others wanted a drop too of course, though she began to say no, when the bottle reached half full. "I'll need it myself, for when we leave."

"You really have lots more clean water in Desperation?" Asked Muriel.

"She's lying!" Shouted Milly.

"Quiet idiot child, or I'll give you a good solid beating." Threatened Muriel.

"All our water is like that, honestly." Said Maggie. "You can ask Roxy, we even wash in it."

"They wash in clean water." Someone muttered.

Muriel believed her, she could tell by her attitude.

"Could Jared make our water that clean?" She asked.

Awkward, she didn't want to make promises that Jared either couldn't keep, or didn't want to. He and Roxy did seem to have a lot of plans, plenty to keep them busy.

"I can't promise, you'll need to ask Jared." She said. "He'd need the filters and pipes from an old bunker though. I don't think you have any bunkers out this way."

"There are two." Said Chip. "I know where they are. I know where a lot of old buildings are, from before the bad times."

"We all do." Said Muriel. "Sounds like we need a town meeting after our evening meal."

"Jared will want something for doing it, bound to." Someone muttered.

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Marie had been delayed by a fire on the expressway, an electric truck had exploded into a mass of blue flames. Batteries didn't have the build quality they once had and owners paid kids to rig the motors, to give their vans a better turn of speed. Explosions and fires were rare, but spectacular when they occurred. She'd been delayed for nearly an hour, which might well have saved her life. "Dimitri is normally there all night." Said Dan. "And he knows you're bringing him a large payment." Dan was driving, with Praful sat next to him, holding a heavy military blaster. No one took chances when visiting Dimitri. Not that he had a bad reputation himself, but he would insist on setting up shop in dangerous places. He used the same car park in 32 East, where Krueger had been killed, so they were all on edge.

"Park close, I don't want to be walking far with so much cash." She said.

Everything was dark, not even the almost obligatory group of homeless people sat around a camp fire. It seemed that everyone considered the car park a place best avoided.

"I see him, the usual traffic cone on top of that old APC." Said Dan.

"You'd think he'd put out a few more lights." She said.

Marie knew there was something wrong, before they reached the huge APC, which Dimitri used as a mobile shop for his illicit meds. There wasn't the usual challenge from his guards, no smart arse comment about something or other from Dimitri.

"There's a body, we should leave." Said Praful.

She saw it too, probably one of Dimitri's guards, now just a bundle of bloody clothes to the right of the APC. She knew what had happened of course, she just hadn't expected Julian to put the word out quite so quickly.

"Car at our two o'clock." Said Dan. "Two more dead guys. We should leave, right now."

There was no point in having guards, if she didn't listen to their advice and allow them to protect her. She was carrying enough cash to make her a target for a lot of different groups. She wanted one of them to look inside the APC, to make sure Dimitri was now a bloody corpse. That might make them curious though and there was a chance that they might refuse to obey her.

“Back to the car guys, we’re leaving.” She said.

It was their last delivery and Dan headed back towards the old cathedral without being told. Her father would want to know the details of course and she had none. Lots of cop cars passed them on the expressway, all heading in the opposite direction. It would all be on the news by the time she and the money were back with her father.

“I bet PD489 took him out.” Said Dan. “They’re just assassins now, look what they did to Crowman. Killed in custody……. Bastards.”

Marie just wanted to know for certain that Dimitri was dead.

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Maggie had enjoyed a little private time with Chip, right out near where the pathway led back towards Desperation. It was a nice night and they’d both kept one eye out for trouble, as they’d leant against an old dead tree and did what kids tend to do. She’d even let him touch her for a while, which had been quite pleasurable. Nothing more than that though, there were certain rules and agreed etiquette about dating, even in the Badlands.

“I like you well enough, but you know what has to be done, if you’re serious.” She’d told him.

“Yes, I need to live in Desperation for a few months. I really don’t mind, it could be fun.”

There weren’t many rules, but they’d been driven by the experiences of couples in the past. A boy was less likely to do anything the girl didn’t like, if an entire settlement was there to stomp on him. A union wasn’t just about two people anymore either, it was the linking of two settlements. A few months and everyone in Desperation would form their own opinion about Chip. There wouldn’t be a vote or anything, but she’d never tie herself to anyone the town hated.

“The meeting is still going on.” Said Chip. “I was hoping we’d have missed it all.”

“Yes, Jared doesn’t look too happy.”

It looked like everyone was crammed into the long shack they used as a kitchen and communal dining room. That was how it was in the Badlands, everything was shared. If one of them ate well they all did and bad times meant everyone going hungry.

“I can’t fix the water for every settlement, but I promise to do yours.” Said Jared.

He was helping Roxy to fold up several large sheets of paper, the sort Muriel collected for her dress making patterns.

“We’ve told you every location we know.” Said the headman. “Some of the bunkers are still sealed up from the days of the troubles. No one has ever been in them.”

“You’ll find filters there, bound to.” Said Muriel.

“We won’t let you down, you know me.” Said Roxy. “We’ll leave first thing in the morning and head for the first bunker. Maggie can stay here, as she seems to have a few friends here.”

They all laughed, knowing that she and Chip liked each other. Maggie had other ideas though, catching Roxy just outside the door to the long shack. Jared was still with the headman, talking over the route to the nearest bunker.

“I want to go with you.” She told Roxy. “Don’t leave me behind.”

Jared came out and kissed her on the forehead. She didn’t mind, but didn’t have any idea why he’d done it.

“Aren’t you keen on one of the boys ?” Asked Roxy.

“There will always be other boys.”

“Ahh, such wisdom from one so young.” Said Jared.

“Stop teasing her, I think she means it.” Said Roxy.

“I do, don’t leave me here.”

They were looking at each other and shrugging. She hated that so much. No one wants their fate decided by a shrug.

"We do owe her a lot." Said Jared.

"Fine, but we'll be leaving just after dawn." Said Roxy.

"I don't mind..... Why do you owe me a lot?"

Jared actually hugged her, before kissing her on the cheek. It was sort of nice, but annoying not to know why.

"Thanks to you, we have a map of everything in this part of the Badlands." Said Roxy. "Every bunker, building still standing, settlement and a few old military sites."

"How did I.....?"

"The water Maggie my dear." Said Jared. "They'll do anything to get clean water, including giving us information on bunkers that haven't been opened up since the bad times. Genius telling them about the water, pure genius."

"It would have taken us years to get only a quarter of this information." Said Roxy. "And we'd have needed to visit a dozen settlements. You did well Maggie."

Praise is always nice, even if you had really stumbled backwards into success. She did like Chip though, quite a lot actually. She'd give Muriel a message to give him. He'd be embarrassed of course and probably get a little moody, but he'd be patient. Chip seemed a patient kind of guy.

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By the time Marie was sat on a sofa in her father's private area of the old cathedral, the incident in 32 East was the main item on the news. There were a surprising number of news services in San Pablo and all of them were showing Dimitri's huge APC, brightly lit by the police.

'Attack on notorious dealer in illegal narcotics.' Ran along the bottom of the screen. 'The police suspect a resurgence of gang warfare.'

Senior cops tend to look awkward and guilty on camera, no matter how well they might be trained to talk to the media. The San Pablo cops now had a pretty spokeswoman with the unlikely name of Esmerelda Day. Esmerelda had a way of delivering bad news with a smile, which left the public feeling protected.

"There has been a massive reduction in gang related deaths over the last few years." Beamed Esmerelda.

"That woman has a gift..... She should go into politics." Muttered Pastor Ivor.

"Shush dad, I want to listen."

"We're certain that tonight isn't the start of a major gang war." Said Esmerelda. "But we may see more violence until the perpetrators are brought to justice."

"Crap she's good..... I actually want to believe her." Said the Pastor.

There were pictures of a lot of dead bodies, not all of them once employed by Dimitri. It looked as though some of his clients had been caught up in the fight. Gang against gang killing didn't worry the public, but some of the dead might well be public employees. Half the hospitals in San Pablo bought meds from Dimitri and the public didn't turn a blind eye to dead hospital administrators.

"It might be an opportunity dad." Said Marie. "The demand is still there for imported meds and we know most of Dimitri's suppliers."

"Yes, Tobias has already mentioned that idea." Said her dad. "The only problem is that Dimitri might well be alive. The media haven't shown us his bloody remains yet."

"Really, don't our contacts know?"

Her father was smiling at her, with his most annoying smile. It was his 'isn't that your job?' smile, because he relied on her to network with whoever might have useful information. She got up and kissed him on the top of his head, before heading for the room which doubled as her bedroom in the cathedral and her office.

"Sorry dad, I'll start making calls."

"Good girl. If Dimitri is dead, we'll begin taking over his network. Nature abhors a vacuum my wild daughter, so we must fill it."

Crap ! Dimitri might be alive and if he was, he'd be really pissed off. That actually made things worse rather than better. The word had gone out and she'd been the cause. If the bastard was alive, he'd soon be looking for her.

"Why is my life suddenly so shit?" She muttered.

Marie sat by the window in her room, enjoying the breeze against her cheek. She began to call her contacts, praying that one of them would be sure that Dimitri was now dead.

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