

Chapter Twenty-Seven, "Clash of the Titans"

Papa floated out of the graveyard and up the hill to the old colonial house like she owned the place. She had a smile on her face and her hips swayed from side to side ever so slightly as she glided along. She was happy.

This was when she saw the green fog surrounding the house.

"Old magic, is it?" she said.

She examined the house from one end to the other, looking for any gaps in the fog. There were none. She frowned.

"Come here," she called out behind her.

One of the Blind Dead who wasn't fighting off the remaining wolves followed her up the hill. Papa grabbed hold of the dead woman and pushed her into the fog.

For a moment, nothing happened. Papa cocked her head to one side, listening carefully. She could faintly hear the sound of many voices screaming in agony. Those couldn't be coming from town, could they?

The voices got louder and all at once, the Blind Dead was grabbed by the fog - there was no other word for it, she was *grabbed* by it - and lifted into the air. She hung there for a moment. The screaming voices were louder now and there was another sound alongside it: a sickening cracking sound. Suddenly, the Blind Dead was ripped apart, sending black blood spraying in every direction. The pieces of the dead woman landed on the ground outside the wall of fog.

"My outfit," Papa said, contemptuously trying to shake the blood off her body.

Papa stood still after that, trying to think through the problem, trying to mentally will the wall to lift away from the house. She didn't have long to think.

Camille pounced on her from behind and slammed her into the ground. The Beast tore at Papa relentlessly, clawing and punching her repeatedly in the face, landing blow after blow with ease. Papa was caught off guard at first but soon started laughing, blood pouring from her mouth.

She let Camille pound away at her for another moment before shaking her head and kicking the werewolf girl off her, sending her flying into the wall of fog. She rolled over onto her hands and knees to watch the girl be torn apart by the green fog but was disappointed.

The wall of fog had lifted when Camille touched it. Papa smiled as the werewolf girl jumped at her once again, clearing the edge of the wall of fog. Papa watched - unconcerned that the werewolf was nearly on her again - as the wall of fog reformed when Camille jumped out of it.

Camille punched Papa a few more times before the vampire grabbed hold of her throat and held tight. Now she couldn't move. The vampire's piercing eyes dug into her mind.

"The fog lifts for you," Papa said with a smile. "It knows you're not a threat to those inside. Am I right? You've already made a deal with Asa. That means that if you and I enter at the same time..."

Papa enfolded Camille in her arms and flew through the wall of fog as fast as she could. The wall lifted the moment it sensed Camille approaching. The two women passed through the wall and crashed into the house...and kept going.

They busted through the wall and onto the ground floor. Camille went further, flying across the marble floor across the main hall, while Papa deftly let go of the werewolf girl and hovered in midair, arms outstretched, like Christ on His cross.

"I've come home!" she shouted.

Almost immediately, Asa's four large, black dogs were alerted, standing below Papa and growling up at her. Papa looked down at them and smirked. She picked the biggest, most threatening-looking one.

"Good doggy," she said. "Sit."

The dog sat obediently, transfixed by Papa's eyes.

"Now," Papa continued, "play dead."

She pivoted in the air, inverting; her legs above her, arms below. Grabbing hold of the dog by the head, she poked both of its eyes out with her thumbs and squeezed. The dog's head crunched and Papa threw it across the room where it hit a wall and splattered in a heap. Her face was pure rage and hatred.

The remaining dogs ran whimpering from the room in terror. Papa laughed - a completely mirthless sound - and righted herself, hanging once again in midair.

"Asa!" she screamed. "Face me!"

It was then that she noticed how many mirrors there were around her. There was the large mirror standing in the middle of the room - just like when Camille had first met Asa - but now there were more, at least half a dozen lining the walls. Papa frowned.

"Where are you?!" she said.

"I'm here," Asa said softly.

Papa whirled around and saw Asa. But it couldn't be. She was in one of the mirrors on the walls. It looked as if she were standing in the middle of the room but when Papa looked, she was nowhere to be

seen in the room itself, only in the mirror.

"What are you doing?" Papa said. "That's impossible."

"Then how can you see me?" Asa asked.

Now she was in a mirror behind Papa, on the other side of the room. Papa looked back and forth. Asa was in both mirrors, actually.

"How can this be?" Papa said.

"I'm everywhere, Bega," Asa said.

And she was. Reflected in every mirror in the room, surrounding Papa. Papa whirled in the air, moving from side to side, erratic and unsure of herself.

"Feeling woozy, Bega?" Asa asked.

"My name is Papa! There is no Bega, I left that life behind!"

"But you'll always be Bega to me. You'll always be that scared girl that I met when my troops stormed across England. The one I took under my wing."

Papa grabbed her head with both hands, trying to will Asa from her mind. "Quiet! Madwoman! Liar!"

Asa's voice was chiding. "Words, words, words."

"You can't be reflected in the mirrors! We don't cast reflections!"

"I'm not being reflected in the mirrors." Now her voice became a whisper. "I'm inside your head."

All at once, Asa's reflection was gone from all the mirrors. Papa gasped and screamed, a sound of pure animal rage.

At that moment, Wendy dropped from the chandelier above Papa. She was in her bat creature form and grappled Papa, forcing her to the ground.

Wendy held Papa tight, her immense strength keeping the other vampire pinned to the floor. Asa emerged from the large floor mirror in the center of the room, passing through it like water.

She walked elegantly across the floor, her footfalls echoing throughout the room. Raised her hands. "A simple glamour. You should learn the classics, my dear."

There was a growling sound and Camille pounced into the room, still the Beast. She stayed back a few feet from the triangle in the middle of the room, on all fours and growling mildly.

Wendy looked at her, a smirk on her face. "Great job you've been doing so far."

Camille bared her teeth at the girl and nipped the air in way of a threat. Wendy only laughed.

"Always so impulsive," Asa said to Papa, ignoring the others.

She stood over the two other vampires, hands behind her back. She shook her head slowly.

"What are we going to do with you, my child?" she asked.

"You're going to be a good little dog and die," Papa said. She laughed. "Like that dog, there." She indicated the bloody heap that had once been one of Asa's dogs.

Asa spared a look at her dead dog. "Yes. A pity. I think you've scared the others off. For now."

"Pets," Papa said. "I have pets, too, you know. Lots of them. Bugs, spiders, vermin, corpses. They are my pets. Ah, but I see you have another pet. What's your name, pet?" She was looking at Camille, who remained silent. "No? All right, then. What about you? What's your name, pet?" She was looking at Wendy now.

"I'm no pet," Wendy said.

"Sure you are," Papa said. "All of you are pets."

"Don't let her mislead you," Asa said. "She's trying to trap you."

"I'm not a pet," Wendy insisted.

"Look at her," Papa said.

Wendy looked at Asa, who stood like royalty over them.

"She is thousands of years old," Papa said. "Do you really think you're anything but a pet to her?"

"No," Wendy said. "No, I'm..."

"She's getting inside your head," Asa said.

"I'm no..." Wendy continued. "My name is--"

She shifted her weight off Papa ever so slightly at that moment. But it was enough.

Papa turned the tables on Wendy and grabbed hold of her, sinking her teeth into the girl's neck. She drank deep and swift.

Everything after that happened very fast.

Asa backed away, sensing danger. She went all the way into a corner of the room.

Papa stopped drinking from Wendy and spat a mouthful of fluid into the girl's mouth: a mixture of the girl's own blood and Papa's. The girl involuntarily swallowed and winced in pain.

Camille sprang into action and launched herself at Papa and Wendy. She barreled into them at full speed, knocking them apart.

Papa popped up like a mad Mr-Hyde-in-the-box, demonic smile in place. She dodged another attack from Camille and took the opportunity to grab hold Wendy by the foot.

She swung the girl through the air like a club and slammed her into Camille's face. Their foreheads collided and Camille crashed to the ground. Papa picked up Wendy again and swung her down at Camille a second time, hitting her in the chest and smashing her into the floor. The marble tile cracked beneath the She Wolf. She was out cold.

Asa whistled at an incredibly high frequency and her three remaining dogs returned to the room,

their courage restored. Asa gave them their marching orders.

"Kill her," she said.

The dogs bounded towards Papa, teeth bared, fury in their eyes. They could smell Papa's blood. Papa, herself, only smiled and held Wendy in front of her like a shield.

"Ah, but which one am I?" she said.

Asa gasped when she realized what Papa was doing. Her blood was inside Wendy now, as well.

"No!" Asa cried.

Papa tossed Wendy to the dogs, all three of whom tore into her, ripping at her flesh. These were no normal dogs, but ones enchanted by black magic, their teeth dangerous to the undead. Wendy screamed in pain and ran from the room, all three dogs following right along after her, two of them actually dangling from her pale flesh.

"Now for the big show," Papa said.

She raised herself into the air and glided towards Asa. As she approached, Asa transformed into a multitude of bats, which filled the room, flapping every which way. They were normal-sized bats, not like the bat creature that Wendy transformed into.

"Clever," Papa said. "But all I need to do is find out which one is the real you." She smiled. "I've know you for too long, Asa. And. There. You. Are."

She plucked a bat out of the air and buried her fangs into it. The bat screamed and transformed back into Asa. All of the other bats vanished.

Papa had Asa in her grasp now - cradling her like a lover - and continued feasting on her, draining her entirely of blood. Asa was too weak to scream now and only gasped as Papa finished her off.

Just before she was died, Papa stopped and looked the other vampire in the eye. She was crying. "I loved you once."

She bit Asa's neck once again and finished the job. Asa began to wither, to desiccate. Soon, she began to look her age. Thousands of years passed in mere seconds. Her skin wrinkled. Her hair turned white. Her flesh turned grey, like a corpse. Her eyes rolled over white.

When Asa was dead, Papa tossed her up into the chandelier, which broke when Asa hit it and fell to the ground, taking the vampire with it. Asa's body crashed to the ground in a heap, crushed by the chandelier.

Papa wiped away her tears as she watched Asa crumble to dust in front of her. All those years. All that time. Now she was gone. Papa's tears were gone, too.

"I win!" she screamed.

Outside, the wall of fog lifted from the house and dissipated until it was gone entirely. Papa felt it go

and her smile got wider.

"Come, my children!" she said. "Come to me!"

All over town, the Blind Dead stopped what they were doing and headed towards the house. It was an army of the undead.

And it was headed to its new home.

To Be Continued...

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