At First Sight

by TamCatG13

Summary

When the young and beautiful FBI agent Elizabeth Keen returns home late one night she is confronted by her jealous husband Tom of having an affair. In fear for her life she runs into the arms of the notorious criminal Raymond "Red" Reddington in a heated night of passion. Red attempts to protect her reputation by having both their memories wiped of the event. Months later; While Red and Lizzie hunt for their next Blacklister; Lizzie begins to have vivid recurring erotic dreams about Reddington; She begins to suspect something is amiss. Red realizes his plan had failed when Elizabeth's touch triggers him into a hypnotic state causing him to have the same erotic dreams. As memories of their buried affair return, she begins to question the paternity of her unborn child, and her future with the FBI hangs in the balance as well as her future with Reddington if their affair were to be exposed. It's a race to find "The Mesmerist" before their secret is revealed.

Notes

A simple AU story of Forbidden Love set somewhere within season one and two. It is my first fanfic written in my native tongue. Hope you enjoy.

*This is a literal translation of "Auf Den Ersten Blick" written in German.*
- A translation of Auf Den Ersten Blick by TamCatG13
Chapter 1

Raymond Reddington is known as a dangerous criminal to the world, but not to the young and beautiful FBI Agent, Elizabeth Keen. He is something else to her. She graduated at the top of her class, with the uncanny ability to be able to read people and predict a criminal's next move...but HE is different.

From the day that she first met him; she knew he was different than the other monsters she had profiled. She could not read HIM.

She remembers that day Reddington calmly strode into the J. Edgar Hoover building in Washington D.C., and surrendered his freedom to the FBI...The day her life changed forever. For some reason known only to him, he had insisted on speaking only to her. It was Elizabeth's first day working at the FBI, her dream job, but she had never expected it to start off like that.

She was so afraid when she first saw him sitting there, shackled to a chair by his hands and feet, like a wild animal. Nervously stroking the scar on her wrist, that she bore in a childhood tragedy; she sat down in a chair across from the man they called "Red." The man known as the "Concierge of Crime" sat restrained but calm, and gave smiled lovingly and compassionately at the young Federal agent.

Although she swore she had never seen this man before that day; Elizabeth could not help feeling a strong connection for him. He called her "Lizzie," in a soft but thunderous voice, and she saw a pain and sadness in his eyes. She saw something that stirred her soul in turmoil. A turmoil that her lonely heart could not ignore.

Caught in a loveless marriage with an abusive, philandering husband; her heart was longing for comfort and peace. A peace that she found in this stranger's face...his voice...his loving gaze.

"No Liz. This man is a dangerous criminal. Don't let him charm you." She told herself. But the damage had already been done. Reddington's kind and gentle demeanor made her feel a moment of calm she was looking for. If only for a few minutes, he made her feel safe.

"Lizzie ... Come here, my angel. Sit down on my lap ...." Raymond pats his thighs offering her to sit with him in the fine leather seat in his private jet. "... I want to show you this beautiful view coming into the city."

"Where are we, Red?" She asked him.

"Paris." He replied.

Surprised, Liz gasps as they fly over the Champs Élysée. "France?...How long did I sleep?"

"Almost eight hours, sweetheart." Raymond smiles and brushes her long brunette hair away from her face and turns to look out the window with her. He points over to a tall metal pyramid-shaped structure in the near distance. "Look, Lizzie...over there."

"Oh Raymond...I always wanted to see the Eiffel Tower." Elizabeth gasps again, and smiles in a half Trance-like state staring out the window. She nestles herself a little deeper into his lap. He sighs in delight as he feels her warmth near his manhood. He wraps his strong arms around her waist, and kisses her on the neck. Lizzie closes her eyes and rolls her head back with a gentle moan, as she
covers his hands with hers, guiding his hands where she needs to be touched.

"I'm afraid that is going to have to wait, Lizzie..." Red says in a low moan as he regains his composure with hint of disappointment in his voice. "...We are here to meet a former associate of mine...The next name on the Blacklist."

After Red and Liz land in a private part of Charles De Gaulle. Reddington's most trusted friend and associate, Dembe Zuma, waits for them in a shiny black Mercedes Benz with diplomatic plates. "Raymond, Claude agreed to meet you at 'Bar A Champagne'. We must not keep him waiting."

"Thank you, Dembe." He says as he opens the car door for Elizabeth. "Well, Lizzie... looks like you're getting you wish anyway."

"Who is Claude?" She asks him.

"Monsieur Claude Hippeau was one of the best arms dealers this side of the Berlin Wall. When the wall came down; I had employed his talents until his supplies ran dry." He explains.

"So why are we meeting him? It sounds like he doesn't have much to offer." Elizabeth asks, a bit confused.

"He now deals in crude oil; supplying countries who don't have access to it, either because of embargos or bad trade agreements." He continues in a steady narrative

"Is he our Blacklister?" She stares out the window biting her lip, with a worried look on her face.

"No...but he knows how to find him." Red answers her, glancing out the window as Dembe drives them through the City of Love.

Raymond reaches his hand over to rest it on her leg, and take her hand in his; squeezing it gently and lightly stroking his thumb inside her palm. Elizabeth turns to face him. He can clearly see some is troubling her.

"What's the matter, Lizzie? We are in the 'City of Love'. You should be happy. Tell me." Raymond asks her with a compassionate smile. His green eyes twinkle when he looks at her.

"It's Tom." She closed her eyes, lowering her head. "He thinks I'm having an affair."

Raymond looks over at her without any visible emotion in his expression.

Elizabeth continues, "He's threatening to tell Cooper."

Red faces forward responding in a deep growl. "He won't tell Cooper."

"How do you know?" She asks as she looks up at him.

"Tom has secrets in his past that he would risk exposing...He will not tell Cooper?" He says as his nostrils begin to flare.

"What secrets?...What do you know about him?" She asks.

Raymond is quiet as he looks at Elizabeth for a brief moment, contemplating if and how to respond. His lip begins to twitch as he then breaks his silence, "Has he hurt you, Lizzie?"
"Not yet...but who knows how he'll react if he ever finds out about us." Her eyes move back and forth rapidly, as she works herself into a lather. Raymond can not bare to see her in such a hysterical state. They have work to do. On a quick impulse; he pulls her towards him, taking her into his arms to give her a long and passionate kiss. She gives little resistance as he is able to calm her fears of her jealous husband for a little while.

As their lips separate; Red whispers something softly in her ear "Listen to me, Lizzie...I'm not going to let anything happen to you."
Chapter 2

"Are you going to keep trying to impress me with your knowledge of French wines what are you going to answer my question?" Elizabeth remembers asking him firmly as he ducked the question. Red had just gotten his immunity deal from the U.S. Government as Confidential Informant, and they were working on their second case together; sitting in a little cafe in Montreal the night he had charmed her. Raymond's green eyes bore right through her like laser sights on a gun.

"How's Tom?" He asked her in a calm and composed tone.

"I don't want to talk about Tom. I want to talk about you...Who are you?" Liz was beginning to get impatient with him. Red was like no criminal she had ever known. He didn't fit a set pattern she had ever profiled.

Intent not to answer her interrogation; he could just smell the undercover federal agents closing in. After glancing around; and noticing them all averting their gazes, confirming his suspicion; Raymond asked to be excused, and slipped out the back door unseen by way of the kitchen, pulling the fire alarm on the way out.

Elisabeth felt jilted and upset when Red walked out on her there, and the heat she received from her partner, Agent Donald Ressler made her feel even worse. He was really laying into the Rookie Agent for letting Reddington get away. "WHAT DID YOU THINK WOULD HAPPEN, KEEN? HE'S NUMBER 4 ON THE FBI'S MOST WANTED LIST... AND NOW REDDINGTON'S GONE... ALL BECAUSE OF YOU!!"

His harsh words nearly brought her to tears. Liz had to take a second to think. "I'm such a fool, I should have known better to trust a criminal." She said as she ducked into an alley for a second to clear her head. "Oh..." Just then; someone covered her mouth so she wouldn't scream, and pulled her deeper into the alley around a corner, where she saw her abductor. It was Reddington. he pinned her against the wall, and looked at her calmly, before taking his hand away "Shhh...Lizzie."

"Red...What the hell are you doing, they'll find us?" Elizabeth yelled at him in a whispered tone; a bit drunk and out of breath, and wondering why she just said "us".

"I just wanted a chance to speak to you alone. Without all the cops breathing down our necks." He said as he held her against the wall, looking hungrily deep into her delicate blue eyes.

Elizabeth's heart began to race as she felt the heat of his breath on her neck, as he moved in to gently kiss her. She struggled at first, but soon gave in, and placed her hands upon his ribs. He was dangerous, and she liked it. He made her feel alive again. She hadn't felt like that since Omaha, when she ran away with Frank, closing her eyes as he kissed her on the neck. Liz remembered where she was and tried to come to her senses, "Oh, Red we can't. I'll lose my job." She sighed.

"They can't find us here, Lizzie...You're safe with me." He whispered softly in her ear, as they could heard the police activity that surrounded them.

"Are you going to fuck me, Red?" Her sad eyes were filled with the need to feel his touch.
"Do you want me to?" He said as he traced his finger down to Lizzie's breast and undoing the button on her blouse while looking into her eyes, awaiting an answer.

"Raymond...Yes..." she nods and whispers. He felt excited to hear her call him "Raymond" as he smiled and kissed her deeper than before, causing the back of her head to gently roll against the wall.
Liz strokes his chest with her hands, as he slowly went to his knees crouching in front of her.

Red pulled the zipper on the back of her skirt and slides it off her hips. He then placed his mouth onto her white cotton panties, inhaling her sweet scent as he kissed her between her legs before pulling down her undergarment and made love to her with his tongue.

Elizabeth dug her nails into the brick, trying to stay quiet, but it was becoming increasingly difficult, as he was a professional, and she was coming quickly.

"Oh Raimund, please...please...Ressler will be looking for you...and for me. They can't find us like this." She said as she heard him undo his zipper. His erection was becoming painful, but she knew he was right.

"Perhaps you're right, Lizzie." He says as he stood up and placed her hand on his hardness. His breath was heavy, and his eyes were on fire. She looked at him with a satisfying smile, as the warmth from her hands eased his discomfort. "Thank you, Lizzie." as he kissed her on the forehead and slipped back into the darkness.

"Red...?" Elisabeth knew then that she had gone too far, but at that point, she didn't really care. She straightened herself up so Ressler wouldn't suspect anything, and came out of the alley.

"Keen where did you run off to? Did you find Reddington?" He yells over to her.

"No, I thought I heard something in the alley, but it was just a couple of horny teenagers." Elizabeth replied convincingly.

"Damn...We had him, Keen. Who knows where he is now." He growls and clinches his teeth; trying to control his temper. He stomps towards the surveillance trailer, with Agent Keen following close behind. He yanked the door open in frustration, and both stopped stunned in their tracks to see Reddington sitting nonchalantly inside, watching one of the monitors.

"Hey there guys." He said with an unsuspecting smile, as if nothing had happened. Rolling his tongue in a flirtatious manner teasing to irritate Agent Ressler. Lizzie blushed and slightly squeezed her knees together, catching Raymond's glance. Elizabeth heart was racing, and she couldn't wait to be alone with him again.

Dembe parks the car near the Parc du Champ de Mars and Red and Elizabeth get out and stroll towards the massive wrought iron structure before them. Elizabeth is truly mesmerized. She links her arm around Raymond's, and looks at the lattice tower with childlike amazement. Dembe allows himself a tiny smile at the sight of the two of them carrying on like a sweet tourist couple, as he follows along behind them as their shadow.

"Le Tour Eiffel....designed by Gustave Eiffel in the 1889 as a centerpiece for the 1889 World's Fair to celebrate the centennial of the French Revolution..." Raymond enthusiastically explains to Liz, gesturing like a tour guide; he continues with his story, "...They originally intended to take it down after the Fair was over, but they chose to leave it stand; and it became global cultural icon, and a symbol of hope and gratitude for the people of France; standing 1,063 ft high (324 metres), and spanning 410 ft wide (125 metres) at its base....Isn't it just breathtaking Lizzie?"

"Yes it definitely is, Red....but I thought we were going to the Bar A Champagne?" She asks.

"We are..." Red extends his arm and points to the top of the tower. "...Up there."
Red, Liz, and Dembe get into one of the elevators, and slowly ascend up to the third level at the top of the Eiffel Tower. At the top observation deck Red does not see his contact at first; So take in the lovely view of Paris until he arrives. Raymond stands behind Lizzie, taking her into his arms and holding her close to him. He plants gentle kisses in her hair. She closes her eyes for a brief moment as he whispers in her ear, "Je t'aime, Lizzie."

Elizabeth never learned French, but she knows what it means. She turns in his arms to face him, and he pulls her close to kiss her softly and sensually with a care that they are in public. Just then; they hear a voice coming from a small table in the Bar A Champagne.

"Ah l'amour...It is Magnifique." Red and Liz break away to see where the voice is coming from. "Raymond; old friend, come sit?" A tall, distinguished silver-haired Frenchman in his mid 50s, with a dark Riviera tan, signals them to sit with him. The waiter brings three flutes of Champagne.

"Claude...how are you? I see you've been working on that tan." Red says as he holds a chair for Elizabeth.

"Three weeks on the Côte d'Azur. You must try it, my friend...and you must bring your lovely mademoiselle." He says with a charming smile.

"Oui, Claude. This is Miss Elizabeth Keen. She travels with me," Red introduces her. "Lizzie, this is Monsieur Claude Hippeau. He dedicates his life to improving the quality of live to the less fortunate.

"Enchanté." He says as he extends his hand. "Raymond, my friend. You've done well." She smiles respectfully as he bows his head, and gives her a kiss on the hand.

Red, rolling his tongue as his mind wanders to what he'd like to do to Lizzie later. He catches himself in a daydream; shaking it off, and returning to the subject at hand.

"Claude, what can you tell us about Dieter Rauchmann?" He asks.

"Ah...Be careful, Red. He is a dangerous man. He is a martyr. He is a man that is not afraid to die, or take anyone with him."

"Where is he?" Raymond asks.

"Düsseldorf. His ex-wife lives there." Claude answers.

"Why would he go there?" Elizabeth asks.

"Mademoiselle, he still loves her very much. When he plans a job, he always returns to her...for her blessing." He calmly explains.

"What kind of job?" She asks.

"I will tell you later, Lizzie....This is not the place to discuss it, my dear." Raymond interjects, as he takes a sip of Champagne. She can tell by his tone, that it must be some form of terrorist attack.

"Well, Claude. Thank you very much. I like to show Lizzie the city before we leave." Red says as he places his fedora back onto his head.

"Ah Red, mademoiselle and you must join me for dinner at L'Ambroisie tonight as my guests." Claude says with open arms giving Raymond a hug and a kiss on both cheeks; the traditional French
custom; and kissing Elizabeth's hand once again.

"Ah Merci, Claude. I'm afraid another time, my friend. We must be on our way. Au Revoir, my friend. Give my regards to the wife....and the mistress." Elizabeth raises an eyebrow as Red bids his friend farewell. The smartly dressed Frenchman finishes his Champagne and bids them a wave as he disappears into the descending iron elevator.
Chapter 3

Elizabeth remembered that evening Tom first confronted her on all those late nights, and secret cases that she was always on. That night; Elizabeth came home exceptionally late. Tom Keen was standing by the sofa; his blue eyes were full of rage, peering through the lenses of his glasses, as she walked in the door.

"What's wrong, Babe?" She said as she set her coat and purse on the table, and clinched her keys in her fist.

"Hey Liz. You're late, babe." He said with a snide tone to his voice. "Another case?"

"Yeah, the paperwork is a bitch." She said brushing it of.

"I bet it is." He says, tongue in cheek.

"What is that supposed to mean?" Elizabeth began to suspect where this conversation was going.

"Oh nothing. Just seems like you're spending a lot of time with Reddington." Tom said as he took a couple steps closer.

"How do you know about Reddington?" She took a step back to put more distance between them.

"He's dangerous, Liz. You should stay away from him." He said in an 'or else manner.

"I can't. Tom." She says nervously, stammering a bit, and biting her bottom lip.

Why...because you like licking his balls?...Sucking his dick?...being his whore?" His voice was cutting through her like a knife, although the prospect of it was beginning to arouse her.

"Stop it, Tom!" She snapped and slapped him on the face, which she realized that would only make him angry. "Reddington is nothing to me. Dealing with him is part of my job. If you don't like it, why don't you go back to your own little whore." She said in defense, as she gripped her purse, just in case.

"You're a liar Liz, and not a good one. If you don't feel anything for him then why don't you kiss your husband when you come home?" Tom says angrily as he grabs her arm and the back of her neck to force her to kiss him.

She struggled with him. She kneed him in the groin, and hit him in the ribs with her purse, and knocked him to the floor; before grabbing her coat and fleeing. There was only one place for her to go where she could be safe from him. She needed to see Reddington.

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She went to the old warehouse, which was his temporary home for the next two days. When Raymond opened the door, and saw her clothes disheveled and her eyes red from crying and clearly upset, he knew what had happened. "Did he hurt you, Lizzie?"

"No...but I don't feel safe. He knows..." Raymond had a pained look on his face when she told him that, and his lip began to twitch as he gestured her to come inside.

"Can I get you anything, Lizzie?" He asked as he tidied up a little bit, brushing the crumbs off the sofa cushion from the chips he had earlier, and picking up his jacket and tie off the bed and laying
them neatly on the chair.

"No thank you, I'm fine. I think." She said rubbing neck where Tom had grabbed her.

"You know what 'Fine' stands for, don't you..." he said as he pulled the crystal stopper out of the Waterford decanter and poured a small measure of Highland Single Malt Scotch in a pair matching old-fashioned tumblers. He took one in his hand, an clawed the rim of the other with his fingertips, and returned to offer her the glass continuing his statement "...Freaked out, Insecure, Neurotic, and Emotional. Here...this will settle your nerves. I don't think you'll be driving anymore tonight."

She looked up at him with those blue eyes, as if for asking permission, and accepted the glass. Red than sat down beside her, and watched her take a sip of his Scotch. His mouth slightly dropped as he watched the muscles in her neck push the alcohol down her throat. The image seemed very erotic to him. He took a sip of Scotch himself, and it was as if he could feel the burn of the 92 proof alcohol flow deep into his groin.

Lizzie cringed as she felt the burn. Her chest heaving as she recovered ; before taking another sip. The second arousing him more. Red could feel himself grow harder as she downed her last sip. She handed Red the empty glass and placed her hand on his leg.

He looked at her inquisitively, and squeezed his thigh gently. She closed her eyes and said to his surprise "I want to finish what we started in Montreal."

Raymond finished his last swallow and reached over her to place both of the glasses on the table beside her. Lizzie's breathing got heavier as she caught the scent of his musky aftershave; placing her palm on his chest, and stroking his black silk and wool blend lapel. They found their lips dangerously close. So close that they could breathe each other's breaths.

"Lizzie..." he said in a deep whisper. "...Is this really what you want?"

"Raymond..." she said as their lips nearly touched. "...I want to give you the pleasure you gave me...I want to caress you slowly into my mouth."

He responded in a deep and passionate kiss, and moving his hand down to meet her breast. Red gently unbuttoned her blouse, and slid his hand into her bra; warming her soft breast in his palm, squeezing and massaging it in a soft circular motion, as he felt her nipples harden in the center of his palm. She moaned gently as he undid another button on her blouse and exposed her shoulder, moving his kisses down her neck and chest, as he slides the strap of her bra off her shoulder and exposing her full and luscious breast to his delight. As he leaned down to kiss and suck her nipple, he repeated the same ritual on her other breast.

"Hahh....Red....Raymond...I want you." She moaned softly and quietly. He then finished removing her shirt, but Elizabeth stopped him from unhooking her bra. That she wanted to do herself. He leaned back to watch her reach behind her and unhook the little closures of her bra, and allow it to fall in front of her onto her lap as she crossed her arms in front of her, covering her breasts with her hands.

Red felt the heat surging into his trousers as she began to squeeze and play with her own breasts. He picked her bra out of her lap, and tossed it on the floor. He then leaned over to kiss her. Liz took her hands away and placed them on his legs, his thighs and moving ever closer to his glorious prize.

Elizabeth placed her hands upon his bulge in his pants, while continuing to kiss him softly; massaging him through the layers of fabric. Raimund was feeling so pampered and adored. It had been a while since someone had taken her time to want to please him as Lizzie was. He just leaned
back and let her continue.

She looked at him so sweet and innocent smiling at him as she lowered herself to kiss the peak in his bulge, feeling it leaping to break free. She slowly undid his belt, and brushed the tip of her nose along the hem of his fly, before taking the pull of his zipper in her teeth and pulling down the length of his fly. His head brushed her nose as it broke free from its restraints.

Liz took her time and lightly kissed the head leaving her tongue to linger on his hardening erection. "Oh, Lizzie..." he began to moan. That pleased her to take hold and pull his trousers and shorts clean off of him. She stood up to straighten them and lay them gently on the chair. She was still wearing hers along with her high heels. Raimund looked over and said to her "Lizzie...please, allow me to see you in your purest form. I want to see you naked in the moonlight, but keep the heels."

Elizabeth smiled, and did as he wished; undoing the zip on her dress trousers. His nostrils flare as she first revealed the black lace panties underneath. She slid her trousers down her hips and legs, and stepped out them. His tongue begins to roll over his lips as she bends over to pick them up, straighten them, and lay them down on the chair next to his.

His smile grew even more, when she slipped her hand inside her lace undies touching herself delightfully making them wet. Elizabeth then slipped them off and let their dangle from her fingers as she strutted towards him, dropping them on his face as she knelt before him once again. "Your Turn..." she said as she began to take his aching member into her mouth.

Raymond took a large whiff from her scented lace, and began to unbutton his vest. They watched each other carefully as they did their separate things. Red struggled to concentrate on buttons as the sensations of her tongue gliding all along his length was driving him crazy. "Oh...Lizzie your amazing...."

He tries again, and finally got his vest undone letting it drape open while he started undoing his shirt. "Raymond, allow me..." As she returned to make eye contact with him. She gave him a kiss on the lips, and continued to keep eye contact with him as she unbuttoned his shirt for him.

Just then he remembered that he couldn't allow her to see the scars on his back...not then; at least. He wasn't sure how to explain how his back had become so disfigured from the fire. "I can't allow her to see my back..." He thought to himself "I can't break her moment of pleasure with such a tragic story. I must find another way." He realized the only way was to take the lead.

"Oh, Lizzie my dear. I must confess; I am a Wanted Man, and you are a married FBI agent. I rarely stay in one place for more than a couple days at a time. It would be very dangerous for us to leave trace evidence of our presence and activities on this couch. Might I suggest we take this conversation to the bed..."

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"Lizzie,...wake up. We're here." Reddington smiles as he strokes her face to wake her from her little nap.

"What...Oh....I'm Sorry, Raymond. I must have dozed off." Elizabeth says as she gets her bearings.

"That's alright, my dear. Jet lag is a bitch...Come on, Lizzie. We have work to do." Red helps her with her coat and picks up her purse which had fallen on the floor when his jet landed in Düsseldorf.
"Where are we going, Red?" Elizabeth asks.

"The Kö Gallery; to see Rauchmann’s ex-wife; Ilsa. Claude tells me that she runs a little Bakery there. She’ll tell us where to find Dieter." Red tells her as he picks up his overnight bag and places his fedora on his head, and walks with her to the rental car.

"What if she won't talk to us?" Elizabeth asks him doubtfully.

"Oh, Ye of little faith, Lizzie. Have you ever known me not to be persuasive with a woman?"
Raymond smirks as he holds the car door open for Elizabeth gets into the rental vehicle.

"That's what I'm afraid of." She says as she rolls her eyes at him, and gets into the car.

As they sit in the back seat of a late model BMW with Dembe at the wheel. They both sit silent for a few minutes both appearing to be in deep thought as they stare out the car window. Elizabeth is beginning to feel a cramp in her legs, becoming very painful. BMWs are notoriously cramped in the backseats, and she keeps shifting in her seat, trying to get more comfortable.

Raymond notices her fidgeting and asks her "What's the matter, Lizzie? Why are you so nervous?"

"I'm not, Raymond. I am getting a painful cramp in my leg. The car seat is hitting me wrong. I can't get comfortable." She says as she tries to angle her legs another way.

"Come here Lizzie....throw your legs up here." He pats the seat next to him, instructing her to stretch them out on the seat. Elizabeth agrees, and turns herself in the seat. Raymond watches as the fabric of her skirt stretches tightly around her thighs as she lifts her legs up onto the off-white leather seat, and rests her ankles on Red's lap. Red sighs and purses his lips as he runs his fingers softly and slowly along the length of her leg. As he does; his mind begins to wander, feeling a warm sensation down below. He so enjoys the sight and feel of Lizzie's legs, just like he had that night.

He lightly strokes her soft skin and massages out the cramp. His strong hands feel so good to her, but as much as she wants to feel his touch again; they have to stay focused. Cooper will be calling soon, and we need to have something to give him.

"Raymond, please...we need to focus on the case."

"Then you had better get your feet off of my groin, sweetheart." He tells her with a flirtatious smirk. Elizabeth frowns, but can't help from returning his flirtations with a coy little smile of her own, before seductively pulling her legs away, but the heel of her shoe accidentally brushes against the bulge in his lap; sending a hot surge up his spine. Red lets out a deep moan. His lip twitches, and he closes his eyes take a deep breath to try to calm his desire.

Elizabeth looked like an angel from heaven when she stood up off the couch and stood there naked before him, wearing only those glorious heels. Liz looked him over as she took his hand and helped him off the couch. Red stood there full frontally naked in front of her as he kissed her on the neck. She begins to melt as his erection lightly brushed against her clit as he moved in closer to her.
"Oh, Reddington...I need you..." she said. Her voice trembling as she slid his white dress shirt off his massive shoulders, leaving him standing there in only in his white undershirt.

"Please, call me Raymond." He interrupted her; his voice a deep thunderous growl. He took her lovely distressed face in his hands and kissed her lightly on the brow as her tears began to fall. It pained him to see her cry. It always did. "I will keep you safe."

"Raymond...I don't care what happens tomorrow...I want to forget Tom,...Tonight, I just want you." She said as he took his shirt out of her clinched fist, and dropped it onto the chair beside the bed. Raymond gripped her arms and kissed lightly on the lips as she moaned allowing her head to fall back as he kissed her lightly on the neck and throat. He brushed the tip of his nose up her, and gazed so lovingly into her eyes, and whispers "Oh,Lizzie...tonight you are mine....I will be your man tonight."

Red curled his arms around her, and lifted her off her feet and laid her gently onto the cool sheets of his twin-size bed; not as big as he would have preferred for a queen such as her...but big enough to give her the love she needs.

"Oh, my sweet Lizzie...let me turn out the light so I can see you in the moonlight." Liz hesitantly let go of him; reaching for him as he pulled away. Her heart melted into a pathetic little puddle as she watched Raymond turn and slowly strut confidently and unashamed across the room like a god in a Greek tragedy. She lay admiring his firm beautiful buttocks, and strong muscular thighs and calves as he walked. She caught a glimpse of him as he turned to flick the light switch by the door, making her touch yourself as she eagerly awaited for his return. He smiled as he turned out the overhead light, leaving only the light of the moon shining through the skylight.

Elizabeth could barely see his figure in the darkness, but then she caught sight of him as he moved under the night's rays, while removing his t-shirt, and then tossing it on the couch.

"Oh, Red..." she said as he stood naked in the moonlight. Raimund was very careful not to let her see his back. He was not ready to have that conversation with her yet. The dim golden hue from the small table lamp sitting next to the bed, illuminated the soft curves of Elizabeth's naked beauty as she lay on stretched on his bed with her ankles crossed, and tapping the air with her high heel. Red returned to stand over her next to the bed. He stroked her hair gently, and continued to glide his fingers down the entire length of her body in one long stroke. Raymond continued his hand back up her leg while looking deep into her eyes, when she raised her foot up, lightly stroking his penis with the back of her heel. He moaned and closed his eyes, "Oh Lizzie...Lizzie...Lizzie...He opened his eyes to see her smile; telling her softly, "I love you, Lizzie..."

Elizabeth looked up at him, and bit her bottom lip as she sat up to reach for him; grabbing Red by the back of his neck, and kissing him with a passion she felt in a long time, and neither had he.

Without breaking from their passionate kiss; Raymond was magnetically drawn to her as he laid her down onto her back; bringing himself on top of her. Their chests met. Her nipples stiffened as they brushed against his. Elizabeth moaned as his hands traveled lusciously down her ribs....to her stomach...and down to her sex. She reached down and squeezed his firm, round buttocks inviting his hardness closer as she wrapped her long legs around him.

Reddington accepted her invitation by nestling himself comfortably between her silken legs. Elizabeth smiled sweetly at him wrapping her arms around his back and caressing his neck. She enjoyed his weight on top of her; stroking his soft, short hair as he buried his head deeply in her breasts, and back to rejoin her in a passionate kiss, playing a dangerous game of "cat and mouse" with each other's tongues.
His erection was growing even harder as he maneuvered his way between ruby lips; swollen with arousal; stroking her moistening clit with his aching head, as his pelvis hovered above hers; testing the waters before diving in deep into her depths. Clinging to his back, and cried out his name in ecstasy as he thrust inside of her slowly and smoothly, embracing her tightly and hopelessly devouring the nape of her neck, as there was no turning back now. "Ohhh, Raymond ...Raymond ......Raymond ......

"Raymond...Raymond...Are you alright?" He awakens to find Elizabeth's hand resting on his crotch, as she had done in Montreal to calm him, and her other hand on his face, caressing his cheek. She smiles lovingly at him, as Dembe checks his pulse.

"Are you Ok, Raymond?" Dembe asks kneeling beside him. "You passed out. You're heart is racing, Raymond. We were worried."

Raymond looks around; a bit disoriented; he sees he is back on his jet. "Where are we?"

"On your jet. In Düsseldorf on the tarmac."

"What about Rauchmann's wife? I thought we were on our way to see her?" He said as he signaled his flight attendant to bring him something to drink.

"Red...Cooper called. Ilsa Rauchmann never arrived at work this morning. The police just found her in her home. They found her in the bedroom closet, apparently hanging by one of her ex-husband's neckties. Cooper says it looks like suicide."

"You don't buy it." Red says dryly as his lovely blonde stewardess returns with a chilled tall bottle of German beer on her tray. She elegantly sets the bottle down on a small paper napkin on the table beside him. "Thank you, dear." He says with a smile, and takes a sip straight from the bottle. Elizabeth frowns as she watches Red curiously run his tongue over his lips as his eyes follow the young woman's hips as she walks away.

"No, I don't." Elizabeth says bluntly with a hint of jealousy in her voice, causing Raymond to raise an eyebrow, and smirk seemingly pleased with himself.

"Nor do I." He says after taking another sip. "Dembe, phone."

"Who are you calling?" Elizabeth asks him.

Raymond takes the big satellite phone from Dembe's hand dials a number, and places the phone to his ear.

"Red, who are you calling?" She asks him again.

He takes another sip from his beer, leans his head back, and says clearly "Our next Blacklister....The Mesmerist."
Chapter 5

...Raymond hovered his lips over her throat when he felt her hands slip over his buttocks, squeezing and massaging his gluteus muscles, bringing him up to a boil with ecstasy. "Oh Lizzie... please...please..." Red bellowed in a deep moan. He knew there was no escaping the fire this time. Elizabeth gasped, and her chest heaved as she arched her back; forcing her head back into the pillow. He delicately pulled a strand of her hair out of her mouth, and kissed her hungrily on her neck and breasts. "Oh yes, Raymond please give me what I need...I know our worlds should've never collided ...but I really need to fuck you tonight."

"Haha...Alright Lizzie...just this once, but don't be gentle." Red chuckled and rolled onto his back. He couldn't believe this was happening. Elizabeth effortlessly threw her long slender leg over his hips and straddled him like a bull. She looked so beautiful as she gave Red a devilish smile, while interlocking her fingers with his. Red supported her weight as she eased herself down onto his spindle. Liz sighed and tilted her head back smiling as she drew him in deep.

Raymond felt his cares and inhibitions melt away as her rhythmic movements made him feel pampered and alive. He rested his head down onto the pillow and closed his eyes; surrendering himself completely to this amazing sensations that she was giving him; her hips moving up and down with fluidity encompassing his length, caressingly swallowing his lovely erection between her ruby lips.

Raymond knew this would lead to trouble for both of them, but he decided to just enjoy it while it lasted. Liz was like a bucking bronco showing him no mercy. His eyes were entranced by her as she moved. Her body; hot and glistening with sweat. Red's heart took delight in watching her breasts jiggle and bounce like a cowgirl try to tame the restless stallion. His body tensed, and their fists tightened, turning each other's knuckles white. He cried out as she was releasing all her bound up frustrations directly onto his groin, but it was what she wanted...what she needed. He cried out in agonizing moan. "Oh Lizzie, Lizzie...Please...don't... don't stop...Please...release me...."

Elizabeth released his hands, and he reached back to brace himself on the backboard. He came hard and with a vengeance. His primal scream made her squeeze him tighter inside her as he arched his back to force himself deeper. She felt his sweaty buttocks tighten as he pressed up even more against her legs and deep into her for the grand finale. She supported his tush with her hands, and squeezed him tight between her legs. She arched back like a she wolf howling with her mate until their bodies fell limp onto the mattress below.

Exhausted and out of breath herself; Liz nestled her body beside Red's, resting her head down upon his heaving chest. She was still scared and confused about all that was happening, but felt a certain contentment near him. Elizabeth closed her eyes and listened to his heartbeat as she began to fall asleep into his arms. She knew it wouldn't last, but at that moment she felt completely safe. She then heard Red's voice whisper "You're a real Annie Oakley, aren't you Lizzie..." He said with a chuckle "I love you, Lizzie. I promise I will find a way to always keep you safe, no matter what."

The next morning Red watched over Elizabeth still sleeping so soundly beside him. He looked at her and saw that scared little girl that he rescued from the fire nearly 25 years ago. She had grown into this beautiful woman, but in reality; she was still that scared little girl, and it was as if he'd been pulled back into that inferno all over again. "No one must ever know what happened here between us. Not even us."
"Raymond....Are you alright, Raymond?" Dembe asks Red as he awakens from another one of those episodes on his jet.

"What?...Where are we?...Raymond asks a bit annoyed. His skin is still hot, sweaty and disoriented. Elizabeth has gone to find him some relief.

"On your jet headed back to Washington." Dembe says." Are you alright, Raymond?"

"What?....Yes, Dembe I'm fine. I just dozed off a bit." Red rubs his face, clearly distressed, waiting for his eyes adjust to the light. "Why do you ask?"

"You were talking in your sleep, Raymond....calling out Elizabeth's name saying no one must ever know."

Red's face is still flushed with sweat. He reaches for his bottle of 15 year aged Highland Scotch, and pours himself a glass. "Where is she?"

"She's in the galley. I sent her to help Edith...What is going on Raymond?" Dembe asks again, concerned for his dearest friend. "Raymond...what is happening between you and Elizabeth? You both have been acting very strangely lately."

"You are not losing your mind, Raymond...." Dembe reassures him.

"I had to call Kate, Raymond...because I was worried for you both, and she had told me something of what may have happened....She had said that you had called her one morning, a few months ago, in a panic telling her that Elizabeth had come to see you, and that things had escalated out of your control, and that you were afraid for her safety if anyone ever found out about you and her. So Kate had hired Rauchmann to make you both believe that nothing had happened."

"So it is true..." Raymond begins to piece it all together, as the memories of that night become more clear.

"That night...I remember..." Red says staring out the window, at the clouds in front of him, "...I guess it was about four months ago...when it happened... Elizabeth came to me in the middle of the night. She was scared and in tears after a fight with her husband...I probably should have sent her away but that seemed cruel..."

"Raymond...Tom Keen is a dangerous man fueled by jealousy and rage. You were right letting her stay." Dembe reassures him.

"...She was so frightened...so scared that Tom kill her in her sleep, if he had suspected anything. She was so volatile, so vulnerable, needing to break free. I knew what it would mean if anyone would've found out about us. Her life and career would have been on the line, and so would my freedom. I couldn't allow that to happen. I wouldn't be able to protect her. So that's why I called Kate to have The Mesmerist alter our memories....to forget anything about our affair." Raymond says, taking another sip of his Scotch "...but why aren't Rauchmann's methods working? Kate said he is one of the best in the world."

"Raymond...I have studied a little about hypnosis and mesmerism, and one thing I know is the only way that it can truly work is that the hearts must be willing to forget."
"You know what this means, don't you?..." Red says with a cold stare.

"Yes Raymond...I have suspected it for some time." Dembe tells him with a look of melancholy.

"She must never find out, Dembe. It would be very bad for her...and the child. I never even relished the thought that there would be a child...I guess I should have been more cautious, but we were in the heat of the moment and I loved her so. To bare a child of one of the worlds most wanted criminals is too much shame for her to carry in her position. She must continue to think it's Tom's. It is better for her that way. I cannot give her and her child the life that they deserve.

"Don't be a fool, Raymond. You threw away a family once before. Don't make that same mistake twice. I truly believe that she loves you, Raymond, and If her memory returns as yours has, than Elizabeth will figure it out on her own." Dembe reminds him.

"You're right...I must find out how much she remembers about that night. So I can protect her from the danger that she is in. I need to know if she lov..." Red stops when he hears Elizabeth enter the room.

Elizabeth appears, returning with a large bowl filled with cool water, and a soft hand towel. She looks as beautiful as ever, radiant and glowing. She walks resting the bowl against her pregnant belly towards him and sits down beside him, placing the bowl in her lap. Liz gives him a caring smile as she dips the towel into the water and squeezes out the excess. Raymond's heart flutters as he watches the water trickling down her arm. She dabs the cool moist towel on his forehead to try and ease his discomfort, and cool him down. His thoughts are still spinning....his soul on fire. Red closes his eyes, and lets his mind wander as he enjoys the soothing coolness on his face. "This angel...", he thinks,"...this succubus hovering over him...sitting next to him...It all must be a dream."

After a few minutes; Elizabeth asks him about the phone call that he made earlier "Who is "The Mesmerist"? I thought we were hunting a terrorist."

"We are...he is. He aids them, provokes them. Dieter Rauchmann is one of the best mind manipulators in the world...or at least he was...." Red explains.

"What?...What do you mean, was?" She asks worried. She can clearly see that something is bothering him, especially after that episode he just had.

"Lizzie, does September 8th mean anything to you?" He asks. His eyes piercing right through her.

"Not really....Oh,...yes, that was the night Tom and I had that huge fight. He had accused me of having an affair with you. What does Tom have to do with Rauchmann?"

Do you remember anything after that?" Reddington asks with a serious look on his face.

"I somehow managed to convince him that there was nothing between us, we made up, and I think Tom and I had sex that night. I think that's when I got pregnant. I had lost my pills earlier that week." Elizabeth answers to the best of her knowledge.

Red's eyes darken with rage at the sound of Tom Keen's name, and his nostrils begin to flare at the thought of him laying a hand on her. It pains him to have to let her believe in the lie, but he has convinced himself that it would be worse for her if she would find out that she is carrying the offspring of a dangerous career criminal out of wedlock, or question her own morals since Tom had lead her to believe that he was her long lost father, which she soon defunct the moment she profiled him. Yet; if the Bureau would find out about their affair, her integrity would be shot, and so would
her career, also nullifying his agreement with the US government, jeopardizing his freedom and potentially hers. Red needs to be sure. He can not leave her safety and that of their child's welfare to chance.

He decides to come out directly saying "Elizabeth...I must ask you something, and I need you to answer me honestly."

"Since when have we been honest with each other?" She says defensively.

"Lizzie, please. This is important. I need to know before we find Rauchmann."

"Alright; what?" She concedes.

"Lizzie, have you been having erotic dreams about me?" He asked directly.

Shocked at first by his bluntness, she gulps and then says with embarrassment "Umm..." afraid to answer; she sighs once she sees the seriousness in Red's face."Yes Raymond...I have."

Raymond's lip begins to twitch, and he admits "That's what I was afraid of."

"Why... Aren't I allowed to have my own fantasies?" She says with a light flirtatious smile.

"Oh Lizzie, you are truly amazing." Raymond chuckles as he gives her a soft kiss on the cheek.
"Oh, Lizzie....I wish I could join you in your dream right now" Raymond says to himself, looking upon her as she sleeps, curled up on his small bed. The vibration and hum of the jet engines have nestled the poor girl into a sweet and peaceful rest...a rest she so desperately needs...and so does he. He wants so desperately to feel himself one with her again, even if only in his dreams, but he dares not think of that now. She is already carrying his baby; a child that she must stay convinced is Tom's. Raymond has gotten her into enough trouble. He dares not dream of making love to her in her sleep; and make everything more complicated than they already are.

Red sits himself down at the edge of the bed, and takes a look at her lying there, facing the other way. He leans over to brush the hair away from her lovely face, and give her a kiss on the temple. Red then leans down to remove his shoes and pulls his blue Colt 1911 pistol out of his back holster; setting it on the nightstand next to him and lets out a hopeless sigh. He takes another sip from his glass of Scotch as he lays himself down next to her just to try to rest his weary head, but sleep doesn't come that easy for him, anymore.

Raymond lies there awake; resting his head on the pillow beside her. He stares hopelessly at the ceiling and then at his beautiful Lizzie's lovely curve in her back; tangling with his emotions, and burning desires. He tries to ignore his hunger and tries to make sense of what is happening to them. Finally; The Scotch and engine noise begins to take hold as he drifts off to sleep.

At one point in her slumbered state; Elizabeth rolls over and slowly inches her way closer towards him. She rests her arm across Red's chest to pull him closer. In his own peaceful dormant sleep; he can feel her soft leg slipping between his thighs; her foot brushing against the leg of his trousers. She clings to him lovingly in her sleep, as her body longs to be close. The warmth of her breath upon his neck makes his heart beat faster, and makes him breathe a soft sound of "Lizzie..." as he places his arm around her and falls into a trance again....

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"Raymond my love..." Her moans grew deeper as Red's fingers continued to travel down her legs. Raymond gently removed her high heel shoes, and kissed her feet. He gazed down at her as she was lying naked on the floor in front of him; resting on her elbows as he was sitting on the bed. He massaged her feet and toes and rested them in his lap as he ran his hands up her long and luscious legs. Elizabeth smiled as she spread his thighs, placing her feet upon his naked groin, and pressing lightly on his balls as she watched him rise. He closed his eyes while she stroked his hardening member with her big toe, and held it between her feet. Red's head then fell back, letting out a deep moan as he felt her feet massage his entire length gracefully between the soles of her feet. "Oh Lizzie....my darling Lizzie...please come...share my bed with me, my love....please join me in my slumber...please...." Elizabeth smiled and nodded with pleasure.

Raymond held out his hand to assist her up off the floor. He pulled her body up towards him as they stood. Their bodies touched, and their breaths met. Elizabeth turned her head away glancing at the floor scared and vulnerable. Raymond raised her chin so her eyes would meet his, and asked her "Lizzie, is this really what you want?"

Liz looked at him with such an innocence in her eyes. Her lip quivered. She placed her hands upon his back and lay her head on his shoulder. She didn't have to say it. His breath quickened as he felt her heart say "yes". Raymond embraced her tight. He closed his eyes and kissed her hair "You're safe, Lizzie. I will keep you safe." Liz said as he kissed her face until she raised her head to meet him in a long and passionate kiss.
Red lifted her off her feet and laid her body gently down onto the cool mattress. Liz was gazing sweetly into his eyes as he was settling into a comfortable place between her legs. She ran her hands smoothly along his velvet ribs and placed them on his back as their kisses became hotter and more passionate. She grabbed him by his short hair the best she could; wrapping her legs around his buttocks, pulling him closer, tightening her embrace around him.

Red then gracefully pulled the covers over them. He sank deeper between Elizabeth's thighs. She welcomed him in. Feeling her legs wrapped around him so tight, and stroking his soft short hair; Red felt himself sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss of his hunger and lust...and suddenly he felt afraid. "Oh Lizzie...my love...let me go...please, we mustn't...not again...please, I'm a violent man... I will only bring you pain...As much as I want you...I love you...I cannot ruin your life...please Elizabeth...release me..."

"Raymond...please...I can't...I want you...only you...Raymond....please...protect me...from the world...from Tom...but don't leave me...I love you, Raymond..." Her eyes showed the fear, the loneliness in her heart. She wouldn't release him from her hold.

He placed a gentle kiss onto her forehead and sighed "Lizzie I will never leave you....not now...not ever...Alright, Lizzie...you're a strong headed woman, but I warn you...I'm a dangerous lover.

"So am I, Raymond." She said as she reached down and guided his erection into her swallowing his length fully and unapologetically into her depths.

"Oh God, Lizzie...Lizzie...Please...Aww, what the hell." He moaned; finally concedes to her seduction. Rolling onto his back, clinching his fists into the mattress, and begging for mercy. "Ooh Lizzie...Lizzie...You're such a bad girl...a woman after my own heart...." He chuckles.

"Oh...Yes...Lizzie...."

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"...Lizzie." Red calls out as he squirms restlessly in his sleep.

"Oh Raymond...I love you" Elizabeth whispers as she nuzzles up against him; her breath caressing his neck, and her hand unconsciously stroking his growing bulge through his dress trouser pants, smiling with him in their drowsy trancelike state.

Dembe can't help to smile to himself as he hears the murmurs coming from the jet's bedroom as he tries to read the newspaper. He had told Raymond that it wouldn't be a good idea to share a bed with her, even in a nap, but Raymond is a stubborn man and he had needed to rest.

Since they are close to landing in DC; Dembe decides to check on them. He sets down the paper onto the table and enters the small sleeping quarters where Red and Liz are napping together to find Elizabeth in Raymond's embrace, their legs entwined like vines, and Elizabeth's hand down massaging Reddington's treasure. Red's arm is curled around her back, and his other hand he had placed on her pregnant belly, lightly rubbing it in a circular motion. Their lips are next to touching. The muscles in Red's neck tense from his arousal. Dembe hears their heavy breathing, and moans from the dreaming couple as they voice each other's names in their sleep. They may not be sharing in each other's dream, but they are definitely sharing in each other's pleasure.

It breaks Dembe's heart to have to wake them from their beautiful fantasy. To see them look so perfectly happy within each other's loving desires, and yet he understands Raymond's fears. Even if they can escape reality in their dreams, they cannot escape the danger. If Cooper were to find out about them, it might cost Elizabeth her job, and Raymond would be sent to prison for the rest of his life.
Dembe loves them both, and he had sworn to protect them both. Right now he must help protect them from themselves. He takes out his phone and snaps a picture of them so that he can show Raymond what is occurring in their sleep. He had told him to. He slips his phone back in his pocket, and nudges Raymond on the shoulder. "Raymond...Raymond...Elizabeth...Wake up."

Red pinches his eyes and begins to wake. As he does he notices Elizabeth's hand tenderly caressing his groin, and her lovely face lying on his shoulder. He smiles and hesitates to remove her hand from his fabric covered erection. He takes his time to wake her, and places his hand over hers to try to calm his arousal first. The warmth of his hand on hers makes her moan softly, gently making him drip before settling down. She slowly wakes and looks up at him with a gentle but disoriented smile.

"What happened?"

"We were lost in a dream together." He looks at her and kisses her softly on the lips. She closes her eyes and accepts his tenderness, not realizing that she still hasn't removed her hand from his groin until she begins to feel him rise again.

"Oh Raymond, I have such a hunger for you. This may be our last chance to be completely alone and safe from the world. Allow me this once to pleasure you."

Red looks at her with the same sad longing eyes, and sighs. "Oh Elizabeth, you are truly just asking for trouble, I hunger for you too, but you need to go back to your husband. You're with child. It needs a father. I can't give you that."

"Raymond...as soon as I step off this jet my life will be in danger. I know that...but for these few short minutes I feel completely safe..."

"Alright Lizzie...You are a stubborn woman...just like your mother was...confident and headstrong...I guess that's what attracted me to you..."

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Back at the Post Office; Elizabeth enters her office with a heavy heart. She walks around to her desk, and opens the bottom drawer to set her purse inside. Liz is about to lock it up when she realizes that she could use some lipstick. As she digs frantically for it in the inside pocket of her purse, she can still taste that sweet, salty nectar on her lips from that margarita she must've had at lunch, although she doesn't remember having any lunch yet today. Reddington had just dropped her off at the black site. She doesn't remember them having the time to stop for lunch, yet she feels oddly satisfied.

"Oh no, I couldn't have." She worries as she recognizes the musky taste was Reddington in her mouth. Liz anxiously does find her tube of lipstick. It had fallen to the bottom of her purse, naturally; a lovely soft shade of red; her favorite, called "Fire in the Hole". "Who the hell would come up with a name like that?..." She thought as she pulled out her small mirror "some sociopath I guess." She thinks as she runs the waxy stick of pigment over her lips. She then runs her tongue along her lips, but that flavor of his cum is still in her mouth. She nervously finds a mint, and zips up her purse, dropping it into the bottom drawer, and closing it with her high heel. Liz unwraps the wintergreen lifesaver but somehow hesitates to pop it in her mouth.

Elizabeth sets her iPhone down on her desk and sits herself down into her office chair. She kicks off her shoes under the desk to run her tired feet on the wooden roller foot massager that she keeps under there when she's stressed. Liz smiles as she daydreams of when Reddington had massaged her feet after she had twisted her ankle, from chasing a Blacklister a few months ago.

Just then; her phone begins to ring...It's Tom. She cringes and tries to compose herself before
answering. "Tom...hey babe. What's up?"

"I was about to ask you the same thing, babe...I've been trying to reach you for three days."

"I'm sorry, babe...I've been working on a case."

"With Reddington...?" Elizabeth gulps as Tom continues his verbal gnawing at her over the phone "What...did daddy sweep you off your feet is Paris...?"

"Stop it Tom! He's not my father...and there is nothing going on between us. I'm still married to you, babe."

"Whatever you say, babe. Are you coming home for dinner tonight?"

"If nothing turns up..."

"You know what...I just forgot. I've made plans tonight, babe...have fun with your boyfriend, Lizzie....'Click' " he hangs up on her.

"Tom...Tom...?" Elizabeth couldn't believe that he would hang up on her like that. Hurt and disappointed; she couldn't say she is too surprised. She has been spending a lot of time with Reddington lately. Since Red had come into her life; he has been handing her so many cases that she has barely had much time to even see Tom, but after what had happened that night few months ago, and with what has happened since; Elizabeth is almost afraid to go home. She frowns as she looks at black screen of her IPhone; finding herself in the predicament that Red had tried so hard to avoid.

Liz sighs and forces back tears. She frustratedly tosses her phone onto the desk, and tries to loosen the knot tightening in her neck, as she still fiddles with the lifesaver in her right hand; Elizabeth runs her tongue along her lips to try and savor any last traces of Reddington in her mouth.

She then rests her left hand on her belly, and looks around at the items scattered on her desk: a couple pencils that could use sharpening with teeth marks on the erasers resulting from a grade school habit she was never able to break....her favorite ballpoint pen that her professor had given her as a graduation gift from Quatico...an unopened electric bill that she tells herself she'll get to...a small uneven stack of case files marked "top secret", and a couple framed photographs standing next to the lamp, beside her laptop.

One of the pictures is of her and her husband, which she quickly flips face down onto the desk. Elizabeth is in no mood to look at Tom's lying jealous eyes staring back at her. She knows where he's going tonight, back to that slutty substitute teacher; Jolene. She had seen her flirting with him at the Christmas party, and he has been following her around like a dog in heat ever since.

The other picture was one of her and Sam together, taken a few years back, before the cancer took his life. He had been the only father she had ever known, and she could really use his insight right now. "Oh, how I wish I could just sit on your knee and talk to you..." she says quietly while looking at his image in the photograph, almost in tears. "...I could really could use your advice, daddy. Tell me what to do about Reddington. He told me that you two had known each other. Please, tell me what to do..."

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Elizabeth wipes a tear from her cheek, and looks over at the stack of files marked "Top Secret' in red ink and sees the the name 'Reddington' on the tab. Liz smiles and wets her lips as she and picks up the thick file and opens it up, to find an old photograph of Raymond from his younger years laying on top attached with a paper clip. She pops the Wintergreen Lifesaver into her mouth, and rolls it
around her tongue as she sees him dressed handsomely in a Captain's uniform with that full head of bright red hair. "Well; now I know why everyone calls you 'Red'." Liz continues to amuse herself while going through the old photographs from his Navy days, until coming across a photograph that makes her blood run cold...a photograph of a house, nearly unrecognizable left burnt nearly to the ground with a date on the back marked '12-24-1990'.

A rush of fear runs through her; although she is not sure why. Elizabeth falls entranced by it. She is unable to stop staring at the 25 year old photograph. Elizabeth brings her hand down to stroke her scar; which she usually does when she gets nervous; but as her finger touches the uneven scar tissue, she lets off a blood curdling scream "Aaahhh!

Red's file drops onto the floor as she grabs her wrist; feeling a psychosomatic pain from the fire that had burnt deep into her flesh. Liz can feel the heat surrounding her. The photo had triggered a memory from night of the fire. Her breathing becomes rapid. Liz sees a flash in her mind of the raging flames...the thick smoke...and the form of her dead father lying on the floor. "Daddy?...Noo!..." she screams as a large hand grips her tightly by the wrist. "Keen...Keen..."

"...Keen...Snap out of it, Keen...Are you alright?" Elizabeth's eyes open and she sees Agent Donald Ressler shaking her by the arms to wake her hypnotic trance.

"Ressler; what happened?..." Elizabeth asks, trying to regain her poise and composure. Her skin feels clammy and she's still shaking like a leaf. She looks down and sighs to see the mess of classified documents and evidence photos scattered all over the floor.

"What was that, Keen?...You were acting crazy...shaking, sweating, gasping for breath, screaming gibberish in your sleep. It's like you were having a nightmare." Agent Ressler says as he leans down to help her pick up the mess of paperwork

"Are you alright, Liz?..Something been bothering you?..." He notices the overturned picture on her desk "...Tom?..." He asks as he places the items back into the Manila folder, and hands it back to her. " If so you should probably talk to Cooper or see the Bureau's Psychologist if this continues..." she swallows hard and shakes her head in shame at that thought. Ressler feels bad about saying that so harshly; adding "...Do you want me to drive you home?..."

"No, no...thank you, though. I need to find out something, first."

"What?..." Ressler asks just as Elizabeth's phone vibrates on her desk. She sees the name "Nick's Pizza".

"I think Reddington killed my father." She takes up the phone and stares at the name with a disguised look of disgust, and then at Ressler before answering.

Agent Ressler takes her cue to leave, but frowns with a hint of skepticism and disbelief in his eyes as he closes the door behind him.

"Oh, Thank God. Where are you?..." she says, her voice just shaking.

"Lizzie, What's wrong? What's happened?..." Red can clearly hear the distress in her voice.

"I can't talk now...but I need to see you. It happened again..." she says in a hushed voice.

"Does Cooper know?..." He asks.

Liz turns her chair when she notices Cooper walking past her row of windows. Luckily; he didn't stop. "Not yet....but Ressler suspects something is up..."
"You need to find Rauchmann, Lizzie...fast. My sources say that he's planning something big, soon... " Raymond's voice becomes more throaty as he realizes the danger of their secret coming so close to being exposed.

"I'll get Aram on it....but I still need to see you..." Elizabeth says, her speech getting faster with nerves.

"Dembe is on his way. He'll be there in five minutes." Red says; without giving her a chance to answer before hanging up.
Elizabeth stands on the loading dock of the FBI’s "blacksite", waiting anxiously for Dembe to come pick her up and take her to Reddington. Although, it is late January; her nerves and hormones have her feeling all hot and bothered. She tries to resist the urge to pace; staying near the brick wall to avoid attracting too much attention from the security cameras. She takes another glance down the alley, listening intently for the purr from Raymond’s black Mercedes Benz to come around the corner.

She is still shaken up from the whole ordeal, not as much by the vivid vision of the fire, but by the phone call with her husband that had ended so badly. No matter how she tries she cannot get Tom's harsh words out of her head. He can be so cruel to her; always jealous about someone in her life; first Nick, her ex-fiancé who wanted to become a surgeon, then Ressler, and now Reddington. She doesn't know why she ever agreed to marry Tom Keen in the first place. The thought of her now carrying his child makes her feel so sick with regret. She can’t even remember being with him anymore the night that she had conceived. Elizabeth lowers her head and whispers quietly to her unborn child. "...you really deserve a better father than Tom...he doesn't deserve to be your daddy..."
She closes her eyes and begins to cry.

Just then; A luxurious black S-Class sedan pulls into the alley of the Post Office, shining like a flawless diamond as it rolls slowly to a stop in front of her. Elizabeth is happy to see that Dembe, and even more that he hadn't come alone. She wipes her tears from her cheek and sighs, still resting her hand over her womb, "...if only it could be Reddington." She manages to smile as she relishes that thought. Dembe exits the vehicle, and comes around to open the back door for her. Elizabeth's troubled nerves seem to calm when she sees Raymond sitting there casually in the backseat. He smiles and extends his hand to assist her into the car.

"Well...Lizzie my dear...that was fast..." Raymond says with a smirk on his face, as she comfortably slides herself down into the leather seat. Dembe then pushes the the door shut before returning to the drivers side. "...You just couldn't stay away, huh." he continues. Liz settles in giving Red a dirty look at first, but then catches him off guard by leaning over to surprise him with a tender kiss on the lips. She couldn't contain her volatile emotions any longer. For one brief moment, Elizabeth's crazy world seems to take a brief pause from reality. Raymond closes his eyes and savors her sweet little gift. Her kiss...soft and genuine, he dares not risk spoiling it by escalating, but she persuades him to open his mouth by gently seeking out his tongue with hers. Raymond could sense her cry of desperation. He reluctantly releases her lips before loosing his own self-control, but while he does, he inhales a cool breath of the fresh Wintergreen still lingering from the candy that had popped in her mouth a few minutes ago.

Red's heart skips a beat when Elizabeth gently pulls back. Dropping in embarrassment after such a sweet kiss, his eyes accidentally catch a glimpse down her blouse. Her breasts are full and perky from her pregnancy. He tries his best to ignore the hot sensation surging through his blood right now. His tongue tingles with the taste of her cool breath. He takes his finger and runs it along his lips, enjoying the sweet taste of her lipstick along his lips, and smiles devilishly when he recognizes the shade as his own personal favorite; the one that Dr. Kimberly had allowed him to name when she was developing it for Lancôme.

Liz curls her lips in and smiles as she licks off the warm rustic flavor of Scotch and fine Cuban cigars left there on her lips by his. Elizabeth then abruptly sits back down into her seat, realizing that they
haven't left the alley yet, she quickly turns away from him to looks out the window noticing they had been in the security camera's view. "Oh God, I hope the camera didn't catch that." She worries as the car finally pulls away.

"What was that for?..." Red asks her as his eyes travel slowly along Lizzie's curves. He follows her every nervous movement all the way down to the twitch in her toes. He is amused by watching her fumble to buckle up her seat belt. He places his warm hand upon her trembling hand on the buckle, steadying it until together they hear the "click". She can feel his hot breath upon her neck. Her eyes meet his, and she bites her bottom lip.

"Take a breath, Lizzie... You're making yourself a wreck." He tells her to calm her fidgeting. Liz straightens herself up, and tries to brush off what she has just done, but Raymond doesn't let her get off that easily.

"Why did you kiss me, Lizzie?..." He asks her again.

She answers him with a quiver in her voice. "I don't know anymore, Red... I feel like I'm losing my mind..." Liz continues by looking straight ahead, "... I feel like I have no control over my own actions... my own words. Red... I don't know what's wrong with me?..."

Raymond then takes off his belt and slides over to her side, undoing her seatbelt as he takes her into his arms. He hugs her tight, and places a soft kiss in her hair, telling her in a deep whisper "There's nothing wrong with you, Lizzie... Sweetheart, I know there's nothing wrong with you..."

Liz buries her face into his neck to keep herself from crying on his expensive Italian silk wool-blend suit. Red sighs and continues to stroke her hair. He closes his eyes and thinks about how much he loves having her in his arms. "... Tell me what happened Lizzie..."

Elizabeth gently pulls back to look him in the eye, as he releases his grip to return to his seat. She lowers her eyes, afraid of how he would react, and tells him. "Tom called... he was very spiteful... he accused you first of being my father... then he accused you of being the father of my child..."

Red's lip twitches as he hears her words. He remains silent, wanting so much to tell her, but cannot muster up the courage to tell her, afraid that denying one would confirm the other.

She continues "... I thought he would change... after all this time... but he still just as bitter... just as jealous..."

"Men like him don't change, Lizzie... Their anger and jealousy has taken place for love and understanding... it is the part of their insecure nature... and a choice of which wolf they feed..." Raymond then remembers the illusion she must keep for their sake. "... but he is still your husband, and you are with child... and the child needs a father..." that last part feels like a knife in his stomach to say, but in his mind he feels it is the only way.

Elizabeth looks at him with terror in her eyes. She feels hurt and rejected by his words. Liz trembles at the thought of going back to Tom, and tries once again to change his mind admitting "... I'm afraid of him, Raymond... I'm afraid to go home... He's not the same man I married... he's dangerous... and I feel so ashamed to be carrying his child..."

She drops her head and begins to cry harder than before. Dembe hears her tearful words and looks back in the rear view mirror seeing the grief and guilt in Raymond's face. Red can not stand to see a woman cry, especially her. Perhaps the same desperation that had driven Elizabeth to kiss him earlier also drives him to do what he does next...
Raymond solemnly, without her noticing for she has her face buried in her hands, reaches over slowly and places his hand upon her womb. He closes his eyes, quickly feeling a connection with the child and it's mother. Elizabeth's crying subsides as she too is drawn into that purely intimate moment. He moves in closer to curl his other arm around her. Liz falls into a somewhat relaxed trance like state, closing her eyes, feeling so safe in his arms, and begins to smile. In that special moment; Elizabeth senses the baby move in response to Raymond's warm touch...and for that moment she can feel the connection, but is it just a blind hope?...or just a dream. Elizabeth can't fight her suspicion any longer. She turns her head into to nuzzle Red's neck; placing her hand softly over his, trying to hold on to the energy bond between them. Liz moves her hand to take hold of his. She attempts to kiss him, and to ask him the difficult question she is desperate to know the answer to; but as she is about to, Red's fingers accidentally stoke the length of her scar.

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"Aaagghh..." Red screams as he pulls away, arching his back, thrashing around as if his clothes are on fire. She is jolted out of her trance at the sound of Raymond screaming in agony. He rolls his back onto the car seat as if trying to smother out the imaginary flames burning into his flesh. The vivid memories of that fire are reawakened in him by his hand touching her scar....In his mind he can feel the heat and the pain on his back. His skin is flushed and drenched in sweat. He could hear a child crying and screaming for her Daddy. The smoke was thick. His breathing quick and heavy.

"Lizzie!...Ahhh...Come with me!...Now...Hurry!..." Red screams as the events of that night is replaying out completely in his mind, but the fear in his voice is still very real. It is the most terrified Elizabeth has ever seen him...since...

"Raymond...Raymond...wake up?..." Elizabeth cries out to him as Dembe tries to snap him out of it. "...what's happening to him?..." she cries worried.

"He is having a nightmare..." Dembe says checking Red's pulse. "...a bad memory...he will be fine Elizabeth . He just needs to be calmed...only you can bring him out of it, Elizabeth..."

Liz then remembers something that Raymond had her do to calm him once before. "Dembe leave me alone with him please...I have an idea what might bring him out of it..." He nodded and left her to tend to him as he went to get them all some coffee at the corner Dunkin'.

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On her hunch; Liz looks at Raymond's contorted face and places a soft kiss upon his lips. She loosens up his tie a bit to unbutton his collar which appears to be strangling him at the moment. Elizabeth then subtly slides her hand down to rest it comfortably onto his groin. She begins to feel his bulge grow and harden in his trousers. She is tempted to remove it, but she continues to keep her hand there, massaging him gently and kissing him softly on the lips to try and distract his mind from his distress and soothe his psychosomatic pain.

Her efforts begin to take effect, and Red solely gets lost in her kiss. He slightly opens his mouth to allow her tongue to seek out his as she had done before. She does not pull away but continues to just savor this wonderfully private moment with him. His breathing remains still heavy, but it is no longer quick in fear but slow and groaning with arousal. She takes her other hand and gently touches his face before catching her breath and opening her eyes.

"Oh...Lizzie..." he exhaled, opening his eyes to find her fingers caressing his lips, and smiling sweetly at him. "Lizzie...Please...I need to tell you something..."

"Raymond...please...don't...I know you..." she stops mid sentence and is entranced, seeing the frightened twinkle shimmering in his emerald green eyes.
"Lizzie...I...I..." Red tries to speak, but Liz places her finger over his mouth. "Shhh...Raymond...please..." leaning forward to kiss him again before he has a chance to continue. Her kiss is even longer and more passionate than the last. Raymond sits up and takes her into his arms, kissing her with a deep longing that he has been holding inside for a long time. He lays her gently down onto the seat. "Lizzie...I need you..." he whispers desperately in his deep brooding voice. Elizabeth doesn't respond, but looks up at him with the same need to have him too. Raymond looks at her with a sweet hunger in his eyes as he slowly rolls up her skirt and leans down to kiss her thighs.

"Oh, Raymond...Raymond...we really shouldn't...not here..." she moans softly, but does little to stop him. He then slowly runs his tongue smoothly along her inner thigh. "Ooh, but Red..." her breath begins to quicken. She grips him by the back of his head and arches her back, raising her hips to meet him."...Red...please...we're right off of Pennsylvania Avenue..."

"...I don't care...I want you Lizzie...You've started the fire burning in my heart..." he continues overtaking her with his charms, giving her little nibbles up her inner thigh, and tugs along the elastic of her 'Fruit Of The Loom' underwear with his teeth, making her cry with pleasure. "Oh god, Raymond...please...we mustn't..." Her warnings seeming to be falling on deaf ears as his hunger for her grows even more desperate. Her legs languishingly fall open, and she hears the soft musical sound of his zipper being undone. Red takes his hand and strokes her white cotton panties with his long fingers, and lightly caressing down and up her lavish limbs. He makes her one last plea, his mind still delirious and shaken from the vision of the fire. "Lizzie...I need to have you now, again...Please, my sweet beautiful Lizzie...I want to soothe your pain as you have mine..."

Elizabeth looks at him with hopeful desire, "Alright, Raymond...take me before I change my mind...before they find us..." she sighs, admitting her sweet defeat. She reaches deep into his pants for his long aching member, and pulls it out into the daylight. Her smile is devilish and deliberate, sensually swirling her hand over the purple head of his rising cock, and rubbing his length vigorously in a wringing motion driving him utterly crazy with desire. "Oh Lizzie, that's so good...yes..." He moans as the first drops of pre-cum begin to drip.

Aroused with anticipation, Raymond pulls off his overcoat, and leans down between her legs. He pushes his face into her moistening soft white panties, lapping up her humidity, and digging the tip of his nose between her folds to find her hard and sensitive clit; teasing her through the layer of cotton. "Oh Reddington...yes..." She moans deep and smiles before pulling down the dainty piece of lingerie off her legs. as he places the wet undergarment in her hand that is rubbing him. He then places his hand delicately on her sex, gently stroking her and slipping his long finger inside of her and then adding another to find her hot and wet, and more than ready to accept him. "Mmmm...Yes, Raymond....I want more..."

"I don't want to hurt you Lizzie..." he whispers softly "...you're already four months in with m...with child." Red corrects himself, hoping she didn't catch it. Elizabeth's face turns defiant and he pushes him back off. He grunts with surprise, his breath is heaving as she watches her unbutton her blouse, revealing to him her delicate chest and full soft breasts tucked inside a white lace bra. Raymond looks at her with such pure desire. His lips watering with thoughts of what he wants to do to her. "Oh Lizzie, you're such a sweet girl...you are so beautiful..."

"I love you, Raymond..." Elizabeth's words catch Red by surprise. It is what he had feared the entire time. Red's face suddenly turns to that of sadness. He tries to pull away, but she takes his hand and makes him feel her scar on her wrist. He closes his eyes grimacing at the memory of how she got it. His voice is trembling. His blood still rushing with desire, but he can not bring himself to speak.

"I know who you are, Raymond...I remember everything..." Elizabeth tells him softly as he drops his
head in shame. "Raymond...I don't know what game we've been playing, but I don't want to play
anymore...I know you were the man who rescued me from the fire. You thought I wouldn't find your
scars, but I felt the unevenness in your skin on your back the night we made love four months ago..."
His mind feels as if it about to explode, yet he remains silent with his head down and his eyes closed.
For a moment Elizabeth thinks he's praying, but he is trying to suppress the desire he feels for her.
She continues to open her skirt the rest of the way to show him her baby bump. "...I know you are
her father, Raymond...she responds to you."

"I'm so sorry, Lizzie...I never meant for it to happen this way..." Red lifts his head, and tries to free
himself from her grip, his eyes are red from the tears he tries to hold back, but Elizabeth takes his
both his hands and places them on her bare belly. "Don't be, Raymond..." Elizabeth brushes his hair
and face with her fingers "Raymond...I'm not..." He looks up to meet her eyes "Tom is a cruel and
dangerous man..."

"So am I..." Red says in a low growl.

"I know, Raymond..." Elizabeth says holding his hands on the baby. "I love you Raymond..." she
looks at him with full compassion and love. He looks back at her with a pained expression, fearing
what the scandal would do to them now that she knows the truth. "It's ok, Raymond...we will be
ok..."

"Lizzie do you realize how much danger you are in...what the consequences would be if Cooper
were to find out...not to mention our enemies...The Cabal...? Lizzie no one must ever know that the
baby is mine. You must continue to keep everyone believing it's Tom's." He speaks slowly weighing
every word deliberately.

"The world doesn't have to ever know the baby is yours, but I can't go back to Tom pretending to
myself that it's his. I'm tired of sleeping with my gun for fear of what he will do to me in my sleep.
One of these days his jealousy is going to be the last of me."

"I'm not going to let that happen...Lizzie. I am not going to let anything happen to you. His mind
begins to ease she hears her brave words. He starts to speak more freely with her about that night...

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"...That was the worst day of my life and the best day of my life. The night I had plucked you from
the flames, your family was being hunted by the Cabal. I know because I was the one hired to do it.
They threatened to kill my family, and they made good on that promise. You were supposed to die
that Christmas Eve, but I couldn't let that happen. I brought you to Sam because he was the only one
I trusted. He hired a hypnotherapist to erase the whole memory of that night from your mind." Red
explains, staring off into space with a twitch in s lip.

"...Sam always called me a 'Rising Phoenix'. He had told me a story about a fallen angel that I
rescued from the flames of hell. That angel was you." Elizabeth remembers.

"...The night you came to see me..." he continues, "...crying and scared after that fight with Tom. I
felt like I was back in your parents burning house...shielding you from the flames and protecting you
from danger...attempting to comfort you and heal your broken heart...but that night it was you
comforting mine...setting me free and giving me a chance to love again. It was the best night of my
life, but I couldn't escape who I was. We couldn't escape the fact that the danger still surrounded us,
after all those years. I was still afraid for us, and your wellbeing, so I had asked my associate, the
next morning, to hire someone to bury that beautiful memory as well, in both of us...as much as I
hated to. It was cowardice, but it was the only way I knew to protect you...I never even considered
the possibility that there could be a child, at my age...I loved you so much that I lost control...I was
careless...I'm so sorry, Lizzie"

"Don't be...You had told me once that 'when you love someone you have no control'..." Elizabeth caresses Raymond's face and pulls him close to rest his head on her heart. "Red,...whatever happens...I promise we will make it work. I love you more than ever...Raymond. In a few months; I will be giving birth to our daughter. We are a family whether we like it or not, and I will not let anyone destroy that from us...not even Tom..."

She embraces Red tight, finding her strength and her courage in him and the deep connection that they have. Their bond grows stronger and Liz feels the need to have him inside of her once again "I love you, Red...you have always made me feel safe...I want you...I want to make love to me again...now..."

Raymond pulls back and looks at her bright blue eyes with a sound of melancholy in his voice, "You still want me after all that's happened after all I've done?..."

"Yes Mr. Reddington...I want you to fuck me."

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Red gets a fiendish smile on his face and leans forward and kisses her delicately on the nape of her neck for the first time for real since that evening she had come to see him that night. He then brings his face down to her heaving chest, lowering the straps of her bra, and gently gently lifting her breasts out of the cups without removing her bra. He gazes at her globes and runs his tongue across her luscious skin encircling her nipples and finishing with a kiss on each one before tucking them back into their hiding place. Elizabeth lets out a playful chuckle as he returns back up to devour her neck.

Elizabeth opens her eyes to realize that they are still parked on a busy street corner in the center of Washington D.C. just steps from the White House. It is nearly lunchtime and the area is quickly becoming more congested with the midday traffic. She feels so naughty. She embraces Raaymond tighter and laughs with pleasure as the danger of them getting caught is becoming more intense, but she doesn't care right now. It's the first time that she has really enjoyed herself in months, and just wants to bask in the glory. She is hungry too and her desire needs to be fed. "Oh, Red...please...I want you...I need you inside of me before we lose our chance..."

Raymond then pulls back and seeing the pleasure he is bringing in her face. He gets lost in her eyes. Elizabeth places her hands onto the back of his head to pull him near, but he stops and undoes his belt, sliding his shorts and trousers down just below his buttocks to allow himself more freedom of movement. He runs his tongue along his lips and throws his overcoat over them like a blanket. Raymond than joins her in a kiss, as he drives his hardness into her, giving her the what she has been pining for for so long. He embraces her tenderly. Liz wraps her legs around his bare buttocks caressing him as he makes himself comfortable between her legs again. His hard erection sinking into her folds teasing her clit with his purple head as he twirls his hips in a small circular motion. She sighs smiling with deep pleasure and contentment to feel him finally inside of her.

Raymond moves his hips slowly and smoothly, both to prevent drawing unwanted attention, and to just enjoy the feeling of her surrounding his swollen cock once again. Liz moans deeply, wrapping her legs around his ribs, drawing him in by his Ermenegildo Zegna tie to kiss him hard. She opens her lips wide as Red forces his tongue into her mouth. She sensually squeezes his firm derrière encouraging him to go faster and deeper.

Raymond is also not eluded to the fact that their cover could you soon be blown. His heart is pumping with an intensity filled with his deep thrusting passion. She can feel his cock about to
explode inside of her. She raises up her hips to greet him. "Oh Raymond...don't stop...don't
stop...Ohhhh Reddington!..." she cries digging her head into the leather seat, tightening the muscles
surrounding him, milking his exploding cock as she brings him to gorgeous state of bliss.

"Ohhh God...Lizzie!...Oohhh....Yes...Yess...Lizzie!....Ohhhh..." Red howls harmoniously with her
in a most beautiful orgasm that feels so wrong but oh so right.

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Raymond drops his weight on top of her in exhaustion, and rolls to her side. Elizabeth wraps her
arms around him just to embrace him for a second. She reaches down and tucks his limp, exhausted
cock back into his tailored dress pants and carefully pulls his zipper up. "Thank you...Lizzie..." he
whispers "...Deep inside...I have been waiting and hoping for you to come back to me...I thought I
would never find that happiness again..."

Elizabeth smiles sweetly, cozying up with him beneath his overcoat, and nearly falling asleep in his
arms. Raymond looks at her with great admiration. He feels completely blessed that he can still make
her feel safe, even with all the danger that surrounds them, that she still trusts him after what he's
done. To see Lizzie smile again is a chance worth taking. It is no longer just a dream or a wonderful
memory. What they have is finally real.

Red feels around for to find that she is still naked underneath. He pulls her skirt down a bit to cover
her as he attempts to sit up and locate her underthings. He finds her panties bunched up on the floor
mat. Raymond picks them up and shakes them out to straighten them. They are still moist and ice
cold from sitting in the winter air. He tries to warm them in his hands before sliding them back up her
legs and over her hips. "Oh Raymond...their cold!" Elizabeth shrieks when the wet fabric touches
her skin.

"I'm sorry sweetheart..." Red says apologetically "...They'll warm up soon with your body heat...We
need to get out of here...Where's Dembe?..." Liz sits up nervously, wondering herself where he is,
and moves quickly to button up her blouse. She looks around and sees him coming with a cardboard
drink holder holding three large coffees.

Just then; they are jolted by a loud tap of a knuckle on the glass. Startled and embarrassed, Elizabeth
looks up to find a tall, middle aged D.C. Metropolitan police officer staring down through the back
window at them. Red reaches for the switch for the automatic window, and lowers the back window
partway.

"Is there a problem, officer?..." Red asks nonchalantly as is nothing is going on. Lizzie buries her
face in Red's chest to hide her identity.

"Good morning, sir...miss. Do you realize that your vehicle is illegally parked in a restricted
area?...Oh, Congressman Waxmann...I didn't recognize you at first..."

"I'm very sorry officer. I do apologize. My secretary and I have just flown in from a diplomatic trip
oversees. I guess the Oysters Rockefeller did really sit well with her. Annie is with child, and she
hadn't eaten much all day against my wishes. She was feeling a little faint, so driver had run to get us
some coffee. He should be back anytime."

"Are you alright miss?...Do you need me to call anyone?" He asks her concerned for her wellbeing.

"No thank you, officer that won't be necessary. I'm fine. Probably just a bit of morning sickness. He
worries too much." Liz tells him playing along with them.
"Such a stubborn girl you are, Sweet pea ..." Red says looking at her smiling.

"Congressman behave...We are not in Paris anymore...Your wife is waiting for you..." to hear Lizzie talking like that puts a smile on Red's face like a Cheshire Cat.

"That's my girl...Anyway....Thank you, Sergeant. We are just on our way to lunch. I will make sure she eats well. As soon as my driver returns, we'll be on our way...he has the only set of keys."

"Of course, Congressman. Sorry to have taken your time. Take care of yourself ma'am, for child's sake. Have a nice day...Congressman."

"You were just doing your job,...Thank you, sir." Red bids the officer adieu and rolls up the car window to keep out the cold.

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Raymond sits back down in his seat, looking innocent as if nothing had happened. He throws his coat on and brushes a piece of lint off of the brim of his black wool fedora, and sets it beside him, and on the seat where he and Liz had just made love.

"Congressman?!?!...What the hell?..." she says perplexed and almost angry.

"I'm not sure, myself. He must have mistaken me for some local politician that he knows...That is not one of my aliases...could be useful though..." Raimund's eyes roll up in thought nodding and pursing his lips as he relishes that idea.

"No Raymond...The thought of you in our in our Congressional system scares the hell out of me...that is out of the question..." Liz says firmly to him.

"In my world, Lizzie...I have learned 'Nothing' is out of the question..." Red tells her blatantly, reminding her that he didn't get to be "Number Four" for nothing.

Finally; the driver's door flings open. A frozen Dembe plops down into the seat, balancing three steaming hot cups of coffee in a cardboard holder. Shivering, he hands them both a cup, and they all take a welcome sip of the hot brew. "Mmmm...Thank you, Dembe." They both say together at the exact same time, making them both giggle.

"I got you decaf, Elizabeth...Are you alright, Raymond?..." He asks looking back at them his big prominent dark eyes.

"Yes Dembe...We both are...Thank you this coffee is divine..." Raymond replies with a warm compassionate smile. "Let's get out of here..." Dembe nods and starts the car making the engine purr. He places his coffee into the cup holder beside him, and puts it into first gear and pulls into traffic.

Elizabeth then hears her phone ring in her purse. She pulls it out It's Aram. She answers it. and puts it on speaker. "Yes Aram...What did you find out?..."

Aram answers nervously in a hushed voice, not to be heard by Cooper and the others, "Umm, Liz Hi...Hey, I think I found something...I thought you and Mr. Reddington would like to know that I found your guy working as a Mr. Magi in Hoodoo Magoo's Magic Shoppe in New Orleans' French Quarter..."

"Thanks, Aram...I really appreciate it." She replies "Thank you, Aram we'll be in touch..." Red adds.

"Oh...Mr. Reddington, I didn't know you were there..." Aram's skin turns pale white at the sound of
his voice, remembering the time he kidnapped him and cleaned his gun in front of him. His voice trembles "...G..G..Good luck, Sir..."

"Thanks Aram...Try to keep this between us...if you can." Liz speaks to break the tension.

"Mums the word Liz...I'll let you know if I find out anything else...Good luck, you guys..." Liz hangs up, and looks at Raymond. He takes a long sip of his coffee, and sighs tilting his head, staring metaphorically at the road ahead "I could go for a nice hot Beignet right now..." referring to the ones made famous at Café Du Monde. "How about it...Lizzie?..."
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

For a greater insight into Haunted New Orleans, check out this link:
https://youtu.be/tm3fUoJv5f4

After nearly exposing their dirty secret to the world on a very busy D.C. lunch hour; Red and Liz return back to his private jet to follow Aram's lead to pursue Rauchmann. The skies darken over Washington D.C., and the weather suddenly turns sour just as Red closes his eyes enjoying the rush he feels when his plane takes off the ground. He looks forward to the warmth and gaiety of the "Big Easy", and a chance to show Lizzie some fun and leisure time, by basking in the sunny southern ambience that New Orleans is known for.

As Raymond’s jet touches 17 thousand feet in the air; Red, Liz, and Dembe unbuckle their seat belts from take off, and relax comfortably, sitting relaxing deeper into the fine tan luxury leather chairs. Dembe sighs and glances out the window. He pulls out his phone to check the weather after seeing the dark clouds ominously creeping into the area that which they are luckily flying out of.

A voice is heard calling out from the cockpit, "Looks like we made it out just in time, Mr. Reddington. They just grounded all flights because of the storm, sir."

"It appears that way, Edward..." Raymond answers, who is sitting in the comfy seat near the cockpit door trying to dial a number on his satellite phone, so far without success, "How's the weather in the Big Easy?..."

"Sunny and a balmy 58 degrees, sir...a pleasant welcome for you and your lovely lady." Edward answers happily.

Liz smiles a bit shyly at Red, and then directs her eyes back down, resting her hands on her belly as she feels a bit of discomfort. She take a couple deeper breaths to ease her uneasiness. Raymond takes notice, while he finally gets a signal through and puts the phone to his ear, waiting for an answer. Red then gestures Lizzie to sit on his knee. He gently massages her belly with his free hand, and gives her a gentle nibble on the ear.

"This is a business trip, Edward..." Red says as he looks longingly into her eyes "...but I'm sure not without it's rewards..." He says giving her a soft tender kiss on the lips. "There's an envelope under the seat for you, Treat yourself, but please stand by in case we need a quick getaway."

"Copy that, Sir." Edward says with a smirk. He's known Raymond since his days in the Navy, when Raymond helped the young fighter pilot avoid a court marshal for indiscretions with the Admiral's young wife. He retired from the Navy shortly after Reddington's demise, and has been a faithful employee and friend to Red ever since.

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Meanwhile, back in D.C.; the powerful Nor'easter is rapidly descending over Northeastern Seaboard, quickly blanketing the nation's capital in a thick layer of fog, rain and ice. The sound of the howling winds, and heavy mix of rain and sleet pounding onto the post office's roof is making itself clear that
nobody there is going home for a while until the storm passes.

Agents Ressler and Navabi are gathered around Aram's desk, comparing weather reports on their phones with the National Weather Services' Satellite models that Aram has fed onto the big overhead screens on the wall. They all study the maps carefully to try to figure out when it will be safe to go home, when they are startled by a loud disturbance from the upper lever.

"Where the hell are Keen and Reddington?..." Assistant Director Harold Cooper storms out of his office, yelling from the balcony, to his agents looking stunned down below. "I can't reach Dembe or Agent Keen. Reddington is gone, and nobody's answering their phones..." he continues as he rapidly descends the metal staircase.

Agents Ressler and Mojtabai glance nervously at each other, simultaneously taking a gulp as they remain tight lipped. Agent Navabi sets her phone down and rests her hands on the desk, noticing their awkward exchange between the two men; she begins to fear the worst for her colleague and friend. Samar feels a bit betrayed by the fact that the men know something, and wondering why Liz had confided in them and not in her. She purses her lips and shrugs it off for now, beginning to wonder herself with the weather as bad as it is.

"Would you people mind telling me what the hell is going on?...I was able to reach her husband, but he hadn't seen her either, and he sounded concerned..." Harold says finally lowering his voice.

Ressler breaks his silence, snapping back unnecessarily "You didn't tell Tom where she is, did you?..."

"How could I?...I'm still trying to figure that out myself...Aram?" He redirects his question to Agent Mojtabai, who is perspiring like a nervous teenager in school.

"Um...Sir...I mean...he told me not to say anything...she did Sir..." Aram stammers and studded. He looks as if he's about to pass out, before Ressler stepped in.

"Keen is having troubles at home. Her husband had abused her at some point, I figure. Anyway the last time I saw her she was afraid to go home...Sir." Ressler confesses.

"She should have come to me," Harold says with a bit of sadness. "Tom said that he was going to look for her...if what you say is true we need to find her before he does..."

"Umm...Sir, I know where she is. She's in New Orleans with Mr. Reddington...working on a case..." Aram blurts out.

"Why wasn't I informed of this?..." Cooper asked firmly.

"Reddington must have a reason..." Agent Ressler utters in a lowered monotone voice not intended for the others to hear, but they do. The Agents apprehensively exchange glances at each other, waiting for the next to break the awkward silence in the room.

"Would someone please tell me what is going on..."

"Agent Keen has been acting very strangely for the past couple months..." Donald begins to voice his opinion. "...I had just passed it off as hormones from her pregnancy, but recently I've gotten the impression that her husband has been abusing her. Reddington has been protecting her from him..."

"I'm wondering if there is really something else going on here..." Agent Navabi says, still with a hint of bitterness from being kept out of the loop.
Agents Ressler and Mojtabai both glare at her with a "shut up" look. She takes the hint with tongue in cheek.

Cooper decides not to press the subject for now. "Keep me informed. If Keen or Reddington call let me know...Find Tom Keen and bring him in before he finds them." He says as he turns and walks back up to his office.

After hiding the plane in a private hanger at Louis Armstrong International Airport; Red and Elizabeth enjoy a casual stroll together through the historical French Market the heart of New Orleans' French Quarter. Liz looks around with such girlish enthusiasm at all the beauty and character of the city on the Mississippi Delta, and hooks her arm playfully around Reddington's elbow, laughing and gleaming with curiosity, with Dembe following close behind as their shadow.

Red glances around at the busy shop owners decorating their shopfronts and store windows in streamers, balloons, and beads in purple, yellow, and green; preparing for the upcoming holiday. Mardi Gras is less than a week away, and the locals are getting ready for thousands of tourists and revelers to fill the streets for the big parade.

"Oh Lizzie, I love New Orleans in the winter. So bright and gay without the humidity." Raymond says while taking in the scents and sounds from nearby Bourbon Street teasing his senses like a fresh baked apple pie. The air still feels cool and damp, but it's a world away from the frigid north winds in D.C. Lizzie is startled when she hears the loud bellow from a steamboat's horn as the famous Delta Queen rolls into port.

"What a magnificent vessel she is...Lizzie..." Red says as they both stand watching in awe, while the water trickles off the massive red wheel on the ship's stern."...The Delta Queen is haunted, you know...They say the spirit of her Captain...Mary B. Green...still roams her cabin halls...watching over her ship as she rolls down the mighty Mississippi..." Red's voice drops off in thought as he chokes back a tear for the nautical life he once dreamed for himself; coming so close to becoming an Admiral of his own Navy ship before everything went terribly wrong.

Elizabeth notices the sorrow in his eyes and asks him if he would like take a quick ride on the Steamboat before she disembarks up the river.

"Maybe later, my dear. We first need to find Rauchmann and find out what he's up to." He says with disappointment in his voice. "Are you hungry?..."

"Yes, Raymond..." she says enthusiastically "I'm craving for something sweet."

"Then I have just the place to tantalize your taste buds...This way Lizzie..." They continue on together towards a busy but quaint little café at the end of the French Market. A writing on the green and white canopy says "Café du Monde, The Original French Market Coffee Stand".

Red pulls a chair out for Liz at one of the little tables, under the canopy, and steadies her as she takes a seat. "Ahh... my poor feet are killing me..." Elizabeth sighs with relief to sit after all that walking. "... Thank you Raymond. I could use a moment to rest my feet."

He cocks his head and smiles at her as takes a seat beside her. Dembe takes a seat at the empty neighboring table and picks up the discarded newspaper laying on the chair next to him, and begins to read it. A medium built black waitress with a big smile quickly comes with a tray carrying three plates holding four steaming hot Beignets each, dusted with powdered sugar, and three cups of strong black French Coffee. Setting the items down on the two tables; she hesitates to place the cup
before Liz saying, "Oh, I'm sorry Honey...I don't realize you was with child...I'll bring you a cup o' decaf Sugar."

"Thank you my dear..." Red says with a smile slipping a generous tip into the side pocket of her apron. "...that will be great."

"Anything for you, Sugar...I'll be right back with that, Mr. Reddington...Y'all enjoy now."

Elizabeth picks up one of the steaming hot beignets and takes a big bite out of the pillow-shaped pastry. Red amuses himself watching her with powdered sugar all over her face. He chuckles and rolls his tongue fantasizing about licking every last grain off her face.

The waitress returns with a steaming cup of decaffeinated coffee and something wrapped in a cloth napkin. "Oh my, Sugar... You is just covered in sweetness, Honey..." she says lightheartedly in her southern Cajun drawl. "You have sugar all of you face, child."

"That's what I love about her, Angeline...she's covered in sweetness..." Red says cocking his head and shaking it admirably, still with the image of lapping the sugary confection off Lizzie's breasts still swirling in his mind.

Liz rolls her eyes and picks up a napkin to wipe off her face. She tries to bring a bit of professionalism back into the situation, by thanking her and taking an elegant sip of her decaf.

"If you need anything else, Honey...just give me a holler." She says with a smile before returning to her duties.

"Thank you Sweet Cheeks...Just the check will be fine." Red says as he watches her walk away.

"Raymond!..." Elizabeth says in a firm voice trying to regain his attention. He looks at her with a raised eyebrow, detecting a hint of jealousy in her voice. "...As far as I know, I'm still an FBI agent, and I thought we were supposed to be pursuing a terrorist?..."

"We are..." Reddington says as he unwraps the napkin in his hand to reveal a key.

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After finishing their late lunch; Raymond and Elizabeth continue on through the French Quarter. Turning onto Bourbon Street; the sounds of creole jazz grows louder.

Red sways his head to the rustic harmonies of the little jazz trio playing on the street corner, an old favorite jazz standard from days gone by. Red drops a folded hundred dollar bill into the musician's open guitar case, and nods at the lanky, old creole black man playing the big hollowbody Gibson electric guitar that has played since he was a boy.

He sits, plugged into an old 1958 Fender Bluesman amp, that appears as if it had survived Katrina, among other things. The tweed covering tattered and stained with smoke and beer, and the brown grill cloth has a large tear through the center, "...but she still hum da blues like a charm, Mr. Reddington..." he says in his nasal southern voice.

He is joined by short middle aged white man playing an upright bass seemingly twice his size. He has to stand on his tiptoes to reach lowest notes on the neck. "Ah...the little man with the big bass...You do know they make a three quarter scale double bass, don't you, Glen...it would suit your size better..."
"This bass suits me just fine, Red...It beloved to my papi, Mr. "Big Boy" Carter." He fired back indignantly.

"Your father was 6 foot 4...Glen." Raymond reminds him.

"Screw you, Red...or rather I'd like to scene her...but I looks somebody beat me to it. Hey there, toots." Glen looks at Liz with fiendish hunger.

Elizabeth is just about to pull her gun out of her purse, when the third man in the trio leans over from the old upright piano left there after the le Petit Theatre finished their remodeling, and got a new one. He calls out "Hey Jellybean...you realize who you is talk in' too. Give the lady some respect, you're mama be right upstairs..."

"Thank you, sir..." Elizabeth says taking a breath to calm down, and loosening her clinched fist from her purse as Raymond holds her arm. "I think I can take care of myself from the likes of him."

"A woman with spunk....I like that, toots." He kept on.

"Glen, stop it...she has been through enoughhell already." Red says as his eyes begin to flame in anger. "I need some information about this..." He pulls out the key that the waitress gave him, and held in up.

Glen's demeanor turns serious as he takes the key from Raymond's hand to inspect it. It looks like any average old house key. He looks it over, checks the etching, bites it, smells the tarnish, and chuckles before handing it back to him. "It leads to the attic in the mansion on Royal Street...I don't recommend being there at night." He says, folding his short arms around his bass, looking satisfied with himself.

"You're sure?..." Red asks again to clarify.

"Positive...Hey, it's an insult that you doubt my abilities." Glen says indignantly again.

"No...No...I don't don't doubt it. I just want to be sure...Thank you, Glen...give a kiss to Gladys for me" Red thanks him, and slips the key back in his pocket. Raymond than takes Elizabeth by the arm, and continue on their way, as the band resumes to play. "See ya, toots!..." he shouts at Liz as her and Red walk away.

"I don't like him." She whispers hushedly to Raymond.

"I know...but his dad was the best locksmith in Louisiana during Prohibition, and he knows every lock, and secret drawer in New Orleans." Red explains to her amazement. "He may act like a prick around women but he's actually just a harmless mama's boy."

Lizzie laughs, and hugs Raymond's arm a little tighter and she leans in closer to give him a soft kiss on the lips.

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Red leans over to sniff a budding honeysuckle flower just starting to bloom. "They're early this year...Means it's going to be a hot summer..." he says while caressing the vines climbing up a backyard fence as they approach the big mansion on the corner of Royal Street and Governor Nicholls Street.

Liz looks up at the eerie three-story building sitting flush with the sidewalk; a grand formidable structure, painted the color of storm clouds and ringed by wrought-iron galleries. "Raymond, there is
something strange about this place..." she remarks to him tugging on the sleeve of his coat, while feeling a cold unnatural chill in the air.

"This is the former residence of Madame Marie Delphine LaLaurie and her husband Dr. Louis Leonard LaLaurie...French aristocrats with a sadistic hunger for pain and suffering...Many bad things happened here..." Raymond says solemnly, holding the door open for Liz and Dembe, "...worse than you could ever imagine..." They hesitate to enter, but Elizabeth's unscrupulous curiosity for finding out Reddington's unorthodox methods and grand isle schemes, forge her courage to continue inside the almost 300 year old mansion, with Dembe faithfully following behind.

Inside; the elegant French decor is surprisingly not as malevolent looking as Red had made it first sound. Quite by contrast; walking through the former aristocratic residence, Lizzie's eyes widen with childlike awe at the giant crystal chandeliers, the tall ceilings with elaborate medallions, the scarlet satin curtains descending down to the marble floors, the carved doors and opulent staircase, Greek columns and an intricate frieze of winged angels in the dining room. The furniture is all in a Louis XIV style, and gives light to the charade of New Orleans royalty they once were.

"Raymond this place is beautiful...I could hardly believe that anything bad would have happened here..." Liz concludes as she spots a large oil painting at the top of the stairs, and goes up to study it closer. The painting is that of Madame LaLaurie. She was a beautiful young woman dressed in an elegant white frock, with long black hair done up in an elegant style of the time, and her skin was of a porcelain complexion; reminiscent of Marie Antoinette.

By at closer inspection of the painting; Elizabeth notices a cold darkness the woman's eyes, and in her subtle but sinister smirk. She knows that smirk well: one of a calculated psychopathic mind, flaunting her position of dominance without feeling or remorse. As an FBI profiler; Liz sees this look on a daily basis on the hardened criminals, and Blacklisters that she has to face. She saw it on Tom on the night he had attacked her...and even on the most dominant psychopath on the FBI's Most Wanted List...the man she loves...Raymond "Red" Reddington.

Lizzie turns to look down to Red, who is standing at the foot of the stairs. Looking deep into his eyes; she doesn't see that look anymore...at least not to her. Instead; she sees a deeply pained man, whose heart is filled with great loss and sorrow. Elizabeth's body begins to quiver, as she feels a strong need to be in his arms again...

Just then; the curator of the Mansion enters the foyer by way of the dining room. "I'm sorry gentlemen I was working in the kitchen. I did not hear you come in." A tiny but elegant ancient Canton woman from old Hong Kong dressed in a dark green skirt suit.

"Ruth...my dear..." Red says as he turns around, greeting the old woman with a big smile and a kiss on the hand. "How nice to see you. How are the orchids I sent you?..."

"Raymond, sweet boy...flourishing like the peach blossoms..." she answers in a friendly, but monotone voice. "What do you want?..."

"A place for us to lay our heads...out of sight, and some information about Mr. Magi..." he ask politely.

"You may stay in Madame's quarters..." her face turns blank and stone faced "...but be warned Red...She won't like it..."

"That will be fine for one night. We'll take our chances...." he says. "What about Mr. Magi?...Is he at there?..."
"Mr. Magoo's is closed today. He will be there tomorrow....May I offer you all some dinner?...I've made Gumbo." She asks changing her tone to a more hospitable one.

The dynamic trio's eyes light up, and become all smiles as they accept their hostesses generosity. Red gleefully says as his mouth begins to water, "That sounds Devine, Ruth...Thank you."

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As night falls upon the LaLaurie Mansion. Elizabeth is sitting on the king-sized bed upstairs in the all aubergine-coloured master bedroom resting her hands on her stomach with an uncomfortable look on her face. Red shuts the door after saying Goodnight to Dembe who has decided to stay in the next room, and fiddles with the key in his pocket for a second before taking off his coat, and hanging it on the antique wooden coat rack next to the full length mirror facing the bed. He turns and notices Liz's discomfort. "Lizzie...what's wrong...Are you alright?..."

"Nothing...I think that Gumbo was a little spicy for me in my condition..." she says, concluding that it's just a case of heartburn from the Cajun spices. Raymond pours her a glass of chilled water into one of the crystal scotch glasses and hands it to her. "Here...drink this sweetheart...it should help..." She takes a long refreshing swallow of the ice cold water, which seems to be just what the doctor ordered; cooling the burn and settling her stomach down. "Thank you, Raymond..."

He smiles nodding satisfactorily, and then pours himself a couple fingers of scotch, and sits down beside her on the bed. He takes a generous sip, and loosens up his tie to unbutton the top button of his shirt collar. Raymond then places his hand on Lizzie's womb, running his hand over their unborn child. His face goes blank as he gets lost in thought. Elizabeth watches him; trying to decipher what he's thinking.

"Raymond...Why did you hire The Mesmerist to erase our memories of that night?..." she asks. Red doesn't answer at first. He takes another swallow of scotch and removes his hand from her belly and drops his head, rubbing his forehead to ease the tension.

"It was a miscalculation on my part..." Raymond begins to speak his eyes focused out the window at the glowing full moon. "...I thought I could just erase our affair, that I could protect you from the past. I had hired him once before when you were a child to erase horrors we both experienced after I plucked you from the fire...a fire that I was ordered to start...I was hired to kill your father...they never told me he had a family or that they'd be there...I had a change of heart...but by then it was too late...the fire was already engulfing the house when I heard you scream...I...I..."

"I remember..." she says, placing her arm around him to comfort him. "...but why the second time...I would have kept our secret."

"I was afraid that you couldn't hold up during an interrogation or torture. I thought you would be safer if it never happened. It was cowardice on my part..." he pauses to look her in the eye. "...I hadn't realized how strong you'd grown to become...That night I saw that scared little girl all over again scared little girl...It was the only thing I could think of...to protect you....It seemed to work for a while but then the flashbacks started...

"He must have installed a trigger in our minds that initiated the memories to return....or was he just careless...an unforeseen side effect of doing it twice..." Lizzie says as she tries to ease his mind.

"That's what I intend to find out." Red says, shrugging his shoulders. He finishes the last swallow of scotch, and sets the empty glass on the nightstand.

"What about that key that the waitress gave you?...Do you know what it goes to?..." she asks
inquisitively. He pulls it out of his pocket, and looks at it, fiddling with it in his hand.

"I'm afraid it leads to the attic... I'll have to check it out at first light. It's too dangerous to go up there at night..." Red tells her as he stares down at the key.

"Why not go now so we can get out of this place?...I get such an eerie feeling here...I'd rather not stay here, Raymond..."

Red cups her face in his palms, and tells her with sadness in his eyes, "Lizzie...the terrible things that we have seen in our lives does not even come close to the horrific sadistic things that occurred in this house...and they occurred mostly in that attic...This house is protected by evil, and I will not put you and our baby at risk of opening a pandora's box in the witching hour, on the night of a full moon...wether you believe in that or not...it's a risk I'm not willing to take..."

"I understand, Raymond...Even for a non-believer it sounds like a recipe for disaster...You're right...wait for the dawn...but just kiss me now...Raymond...kiss me...I need to feel you against my skin...make love to me tonight...now..."

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Raymond's green eyes light up with her smile, and with little protest he grips her arms, pulling her close for a deep and passionate kiss. She takes his head in her hands to kiss him harder. Red's hands move up her shoulders to caress Lizzie's neck, and run his fingers sensually through her dark brown hair. She moans so softly while their tongues entwine in a glorious dance inside her mouth.

He descends his fingers tracing down her jugular to gently unbutton the top button of her shirt collar, and continues down until he feels the soft lace of her bra tickle his fingertips. Raymond then slips his hand into one of the cups, softly massaging delicate full breast, giving her a gentle squeeze. Elizabeth's head falls slowly back exhaling a soft whispered moan "Oh Raymond..." offering up her neck for his devouring kisses while he continues to undress her. He undoes the remaining buttons, and slides her blouse down the length of her arms, before tossing it aside.

"Oh Lizzie you're so beautiful...I need you to feed my hunger..." Red says while kissing her neck and chest, sliding her bra's spaghetti strap off her shoulder to seek out her tit. Raymond kisses, licks and teases her exposed nipple as he continues to squeeze the other breast with his hand. Liz reaches behind her to unhook her bra, and give him full access to her luscious globes. Just as she does; Elizabeth feels Raymond's free hand slip into her trousers, and into her underwear. She loosens her zipper giving his hand more freedom to move. His long index finger slides softly and rhythmically between her hot folds, making her wet and slippery. She smiles and sighs with the delight of his touch.

" Oh yes...Lie down, sweetheart...I'm going to make you feel so wonderful..."

Liz scoots herself back and lies herself down on the bed, resting her head on the aubergine satin pillows. Red gets up to walk to the foot of the bed. He gently removes Elizabeth's shoes to massage and plant light kisses on her feet. "You've been on your feet all day...you must be exhausted..."

"You have no idea, Raymond..." she says, watching him pamper her like a queen. At this point Liz has made an important decision about something in her life, but she decides to hold off in telling him until later on so as not to distract from this beautiful moment. "Red...I want to see you naked..."

Red smiles; getting up off the bed and responds playfully, "Me first..." He then leans over her and pulls off her black dress trousers along with her moist lace panties. Raymond just stands back and admires her naked beauty as he had that night.
"Come on, Reddington...Take off your clothes...I want to see you naked in the moonlight again..."
She playfully begs while relaxing on her back, lying there naked on the bed where Raymond had left her.

"Haha...Alright Lizzie...I won't torture you anymore..." Red chuckles as he slides off his vest, and tosses it neatly onto the chair. Her eyes follow Raymond around the room, watching him shed his clothes quickly, and tossing the articles onto the chair near the window. He then walks towards her stripped down to his burgundy boxer shorts, and stands over her. He takes her hand and slips it into the Y-front opening of his boxers to feel his delicious sausage and meatballs.

She reaches down to touch herself while massaging his package, making him harder with each subtle stroke. Red leans his head back and lets off a soft deep moan as she gives him a little squeeze. Liz then takes her hand away, and pulls her hand out of his shorts, looking at him with a look of annoyance, "Your job is not done, Raymond...Take them off..." she demands.

Raymond raises his eyebrow, and rolls his tongue in his cheek. He pauses with a childish pout, he indignantly slides the elastic band of his boxers past his hips, and lets them fall blatantly to the floor. "Oh Ray...I remember you..." Elizabeth sighs, as her eyes travel all over him"...come play with me...Ray..."

He then smiles and climbs into bed with her. Raymond hovers closely over Lizzie's curvy shape. Red tries his best to reach her lips from above, but in reality, Liz is nearly seven months into her pregnancy and it is getting increasingly more challenging for him to make love to her. His own indulgences have left his belly not as flat as it used to be, but he doesn't let that stop him. Red loves her more and more everyday, and he's going to love her the best he can.

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Elizabeth can not see what Red is doing for her downward view is obstructed, but she feels the growing heat between her legs as Raymond's tongue caresses her softly up her thighs and resides comfortably around her clit. His eyes are closed and his tongue is soft. Red takes his time to worship every inch of her. He teasingly flicks his tongue gently near her opening, humming a soft lullaby contently while gliding his hands up her legs, and over her stomach. He hears a soft moan from her as he slips his tongue inside of her. Lapping up the increasing moisture from her welcoming sex, he is about to advance his tongue deeper when he hears her say, "Red...I'm getting a divorce..."

Raymond stops what he's doing right in his tracks, and looks up into Elizabeth's eyes. He sighs as he raises himself up, hovering his naked body over hers until their eyes are less than inches apart. He looks at her with a cold expression in the dim candlelight. Liz gazes into his worried eyes, trying to read what he's thinking. She places her hand onto Red's cheek and attempts to kiss him by he doesn't react to her tenderness. "Raymond, what's wrong...I thought you'd be happy...You never liked Tom..."

"I don't, Lizzie..." He says emphatically. "He's more dangerous than you will ever know, but...." Red stops, climbs off of her, and sits naked at the edge of the bed; as he rests his elbows on his knees while burying his face into his palms.

"But what..." Lizzie struggles, but manages to lift herself up. In the dim orange glow Lizzie sees for the first time the carnage left by the fire on Raymond's back. She is horrified at first at the severity of his injuries, shedding a tear for all the pain he must have endured, and how much he suffered for her. Liz then glances sadly down at her own scar on her wrist; feeling a bit of the blame herself for causing the grotesque disfiguring of his beautiful back, forcing him to become the monster he is known as today.
Elizabeth continues to rub her scar against his back, and shifts her weight to get closer to him. She leans over him, kissing Red gently behind his ear as she curls her free hand around and between his legs. "Oh Lizzie...the fire...the flames...I feel them..." His skin feels hot and he begins to perspire.

"Oh,Lizzie...Please..."he whispers a moan as she wraps her hand around his shaft, caressing him with long smooth strokes. His breath grows deeper "Lizzie,...You know you'll burn in the fire with me...Is this really what you want?..."

Elizabeth does not to answer him, but continues to kiss him softly on the neck; whispering softly in his ear "Raymond...you are safe...I will keep you safe through the fire..." Liz feels him getting harder and erect. He sighs, realizing he cannot say anything to change this stubborn girl's mind. She then turns his head kiss him devotedly on the lips. "Red...I'm going to take you into my mouth." Before having a chance to react, Lizzie coils around him and seems to swallow his entire length deep into her throat.

"Oh Good God...Lizzie" Red howls with great pleasure; watching Lizzie's mouth engulf every last inch of him. He smiles, raising his head and leaning back comfortably onto his elbows. Raymond's breath quickens, and his moans grow longer as he is soon overcome by the rippling undulations of her tongue, sending the fire down to his toes. "Ohh 'Jiminy Cricket' Lizzie....you're killing me...Ahh..."

Raymond scoots himself back farther onto the bed to support his head on the pillow as his body tightens with intense pleasure. Lizzie rubs her hands in a circular motion over his belly, massaging his abdomen as his scepter slides in and out of her mouth. Red places his hands gently on her head, gently gripping her dark auburn hair. "Oh my dear Lizzie...You are my Mississippi Queen...Please...Give me more..."

Lizzie smiles at him hungrily; and like a mermaid coming up out of the water; she lifts herself up, arching back and looks down at him with intense pleasure; breathing heavy, her mouth dripping with his desire.

Red's erection stands tall, hard, and wet; pulsing with a "come hither" motion as she throws her leg over straddling him, and hovering her sex over him, continuing to swirl her hands all over his sweaty tummy before sinking herself down onto his spindle, drawing him in. "Ohhh Yes Red..."

Raymond grabs her by the tush to help her keep her balance, riding him as she had that first night. "Oh Lizzie my love...I've been such a fool..." he says seeing how happy and relaxed she is with him. "...It was irresponsible of me to try to bury the past....Ohh...Fuck...Lizzie..." Lizzie's extra weight is putting more intense pressure on his sensitive cock making his heart race even faster with passion, as he comes quickly reaching to an explosive orgasm. "Ohhhhh Fuck Elizabeth....I want you to marry me...."

They both get so lost in their own ecstasy, that they don't notice the door slowly crack open. Red opens his eyes long enough to spot a tall dark figure in the full length mirror coming up behind Liz, with a rolled up bed sheet stretched taught in his gloved hands. Raymond has his sights fixated on the intruder's reflection in the mirror, as he reaches for something hidden under the sheets.

"Ohhh Raymond...Yes...Yes...Ray, I want you...I want us to be a family....Oh Raymond...Yessss...."
Elizabeth howls with erotic pleasure just before she suddenly feels a firm tightness around her neck. "Ahhhhh!!"

Liz screams are choked off. She grabs the sheet that is tightening around her neck. Red quickly pulls out a .38 revolver and fires at her attacker in the dark. "BANG!!!" The shot misses but the assailant; dressed all in black and wearing a ski mask; releases his deadly hold on her, throwing Elizabeth down to the floor, before running off and escaping through the window.

"Lizzie...Are you alright?..." Red runs over to her. Liz nods her head; coughing and rubbing her delicate neck; she gestures to go after him.

Red goes after him through the window onto the second floor gallery. The man disappearing into the darkness. Frustrated with himself for losing him; he pauses for a moment, resting his elbows on the wrought-iron balcony railing to take a breath and reflect on the events of the last two minutes.

The street is unusually dark and deserted at that early morning hour. The street lamp had burned out and there was not another soul wandering the streets except for one staggering old drunkard singing Fats Waller's "Chantilly Lace". The only light shining is that coming from the full moon, which has temporarily hidden behind a cloud.

It is lucky for Red, for he has forgotten that he is standing on the Mansion's gallery in stark naked with nothing but his trusty Revolver in his hand. His face is still flushed with anger and adrenaline. His erection still firm as it blows in the breeze. The raw fermented stench from Jax brewery filling the air seems to calm his rage.

"Raymond...Raymond..." a welcome sound to Red's ears. "Lizzie..." She has now recovered her breath, and pops her head out of the window. She sees him just standing there seemingly lost in deep thought. His firm muscular buttocks and strong thighs glistening in the moonlight once again. His back; although deeply scarred from the third degree burns he experienced in the fire, have become a beautiful comforting sight to her. She steps out onto the balcony carrying a robe for him. Liz had found an old white nightgown in one of the drawers. She drapes the forest green robe over his broad shoulders, and rests her head on his back.

Red closes his eyes in guilt and shame. He reaches over to touch her hand. "Lizzie... I'm so sorry..." he says sorrowfully. "I love you so much, but I'm afraid I can't protect you from the dangers we face..."

"Raymond...That was Tom...I know it was..." she says without doubt. Red's rage begins to build inside of him again at the sound of his name. He asks "How do you know?..."

"I know the vengeful grip of my husband...I have been there before..." Red is pained by those words. He feels caught between a rock and a hard place. He turns around to face her. Her eyes look as sweet and innocent as the first day he saw her. "How did he find us Ray?...How did he find us?..." she asks desperately.

"I don't know, Lizzie..."He says. "He must have followed you somehow..." frustrated for losing him, he turns away from her and pounds his fist onto the metal railing.

Elizabeth wraps her arms around his ribs, squeezing him tight"...I love you, Red...I have made up my mind...I am divorcing Tom...and I am going to marry you...I want our child to have a good loving father...she deserves that..."
Raymond turns to face her, saying blankly, "What about your career, Lizzie that you had worked so hard for...your freedom...If we do this you will be considered a fugitive just like me...you can never return to a normal life, again..." He tells her as a last ditch effort to come to her senses.

Although she knows Raymond truly wants what's best for her; trying to distance her as far as he can from the evils of his world; Lizzie gets increasingly frustrated with him trying to patronize her, not realizing how far deep in danger she is already in. Elizabeth places her hand on Raymond's cheek with the most sincerity she can muster, "...Then tell me you don't love me, Raymond...tell me you regret getting caught in the flames protecting me from the fire..."

Red remains silent in disbelief in what he's hearing. She takes his hand, and places it on their unborn daughter."...Tell me that what we have isn't worth fighting for..." He feels the baby move in her mother's womb, responding to her father's touch. "Tell me that, Raymond...just say it and I will return to my normal life to raise your child with Tom..."

Raymond looks at Lizzie's sweet angelic face. He can barely speak the words "I can't do that, Lizzie...I will never stop loving you...or our child...I cannot bear the thought of losing either of you..."

Red then sees the bruises beginning to form on her soft and delicate neck. His lip twitches as he touches the heliotrope marks on her porcelain skin. "...Damn it, Lizzie...I am such a fool...It is right in front of me, and I am too blind to see it..."

An awkward pause forms between them as he collects his thoughts "...I should have done this a long time ago..." Raymond then desperately grips her shoulders, and lifts her off her feet, kissing her with great fervor. "Forgive me Lizzie...I let my fears speak for me...I don't deserve your devotion...but you deserve to feel safe...and no matter what happens...Tom Keen will never touch you again..."

Elizabeth fears that look in his eyes, but brushes it off for now. She wraps her arms around him in victory, whispering to him "I regret nothing, Raymond...I have always felt safe with you...despite what cards we are dealt...I know the what potential risks are for loving you...I will welcome them..." She stops to look into his twinkling green eyes in the moonlight, their lips less than inches apart. She continues "...but I will not deny what my heart truly wants...I want you, Ray...I love you...and I will always be proud to be your wife..."

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He attempts to draw her in for one last kiss on the gallery before returning to bed when they are interrupted by a blood curdling screams coming from the room next to theirs, where Dembe is supposed to be sleeping. Red follows the noise, breaking the window with the but of his gun to get inside. Elizabeth returns through their room to get her Glock from her purse before entering his room through the hallway.

She kicks in the door to find Dembe, having what appears to be some kind of panic attack, with Raymond beside him trying to calm him down, and checking feeling his pulse. "Dembe!...Dembe!...Talk to me...What happened?..."

His face is cold and drenched with sweat with a pale ghostly expression on his face. "Raymond...That woman...black hair...white dress...She tried to kill me...strangle me..." His voice is shaking and his breathing is rapid.

"What woman?...that's Elizabeth...she would never hurt you..." Raymond says as he signals her to bring Dembe some water.
"...No...Raymond...not Elizabeth...French woman..." He continues while Liz brings him a cold glass of water. "Thank you, Elizabeth..."

"Are you alright Dembe?...You look like you've seen a ghost..." Elizabeth asks him as he takes a cold sip of the water.

"He has..." Ruth had heard the commotion from the other end of the house and had come to see. "...Raymond I warned you about bringing your slave here...Madame LaLaurie's Ghost has tried to kill his kind before in this house. They are just toys for her sadistic pleasure..."

"Dembe has never been my slave!..." Red's words lash back at the old woman with fire in his eyes "...I rescued him from that fate decades ago, and practically raised him as my own son. He is my dearest friend, and most trusted right hand..."

"Raymond..." Liz is almost in tears from all she is hearing. "...Raymond let's just get out of here...Look it's getting light outside...Please just get what you came for and let's leave this house of horror..."

"My thoughts exactly...Go get yourself dressed Lizzie...Ruth will stay with you until I get back...I've got to get into that attic...Where is the key?..." Red says frantically and upset; wanting to waist no time to leave that place himself after all that's happened there that night.

"It's in the pocket of your trousers..." Liz reminds him, remembering that he put it there last night before they made love.

"Ah, yes well...I guess I better get changed myself..." Noticing he is still in his forest green robe that she handed him on the gallery. Red leaves quickly to get his clothes and the key to the attic.

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Red returns is his three-piece suit, hat, and coat holding the key in his hand. "Dembe...how are you...Are you ok?..." he asks.

"Yes Raymond..." Dembe says, who is looking like his old self now.

"Good...I will need your help...You come with me...Ruth you stay with Elizabeth I don't want her to have to see anything else of what happened here...." Red's smile is directed at Lizzie "...I'll be right back, sweetheart...Wait for us downstairs..."

Although very anxious to get out of that house as soon as possible; she smiles back and blows him a kiss "Be careful, Raymond...Hurry back."

Red returns her kiss, and he and Dembe leave the room to find the door to the LaLaurie's attic.

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Red and Dembe hastily walk down the hallway towards the other side of the house. They come down to the door that leads up to the attic which once housed the LaLaurie's torture chamber; where the French aristocratic doctor and his wife would commit heinous acts of torture, murder and gross human experiments on the slaves of the household, until fire consumed the mansion in 1834.

Raymond stops for a second and asks Dembe " Many horrific things occurred beyond this door...If you'd rather not continue up there, just wait for me here. I'll go and find what I need...

Dembe answers "It's ok, Thank you Raymond...I have seen things much worse in the country from
Red nods; and then pulls the key out of his pocket and inserts it into the lock. He tries to jiggle and turn it, but the tumblers do not budge. "Damn it, Glen...you've never steered me wrong before." Frustrated; he pulls it out of the lock, and slips it back into his pocket; only to realize that the door is already open.

Raymond becomes skeptical and decides to pull out his gun just in case. Dembe decides to do the same as they the old but twice refurbished wooden staircase. They expect to find a room reminiscent of something from Edgar Allen Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum", but when they reach the top of the stair they are surprised to find it had been converted into a nursery.

"Well this is unexpected..." Raymond looks around to find nothing of the room's former usage. "What do you suppose we are looking for?..." he sees a vintage style bassinet in the center of the floor, and crib in the corner a large dresser with many drawers and in a dark corner of the room a large cedar trunk that appears out of place from the items in the rest of the room. It has a very large padlock on it.

On a hunch; Raymond takes out his key again and tries the lock. It pops right open. He lifts the lid to find a whole mess of old and new paperwork filled to the brim. "Oh Dembe...this will take hours..."

"No it won't, Raymond...I will help you...Maybe we we'll get lucky..." Dembe says as he takes a large wad of papers and begins to thumb through them. Red does the same, looking for anything of significant pertaining to their case.

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While going through mountains of typed and handwritten letters, documents, receipts; Dembe notices that something is pressing uncomfortably on Red's mind. He decides to break the silence as they keep searching "Are you alright, Raymond?...your mind seems distant..."

Red sighs; and grabs another stack to flip through. He answers him, confiding in his old friend, in a low voice, "I had sex with Elizabeth last night. She is truly amazing...She told me last night that she wanted a divorce from Tom Keen, and in a heat of sexual passion I told her I wanted her to marry me....in the same moment of passion she said yes."

"The scandal will be brutal for a woman in Elizabeth's position..." Dembe answers back. "...but that said; I don't think she is afraid of scandal...I also think it is wonderful...Congratulations; You should be happy, Raymond..."

"...I didn't think she was serious at first...and I attempted to talk some sense into her but she wouldn't have it. She wants us to be a family...but I can't give her the normal life that she always dreamed of...We would be fugitives constantly on the run...That's no way to raise a family..."

"Raymond, you know better than anyone that she has never lived a normal life. I have not known Elizabeth as long as you have, but I know that she is a strong determined woman...and that she really loves you Raymond..."

"...I love her too, Dembe...but I'm afraid I can't protect her and her baby from the evils in my world. I can't bear losing her or that child..."

"...You're pride is getting in the way of your real happiness, Raymond...You are letting your past is leave you blind to this great gift that you are given...We can not protect the ones we love from everything in life, but you can protect her from what she fears the most...her husband...Elizabeth is
risking everything just to be with you, because you make her happy...You know she will never go back to Tom Keen...after what he did to her...scandal or not, you can't force her to...

"...She believes divorcing Tom is going to make her safe...Dembe...Tom Keen is not one to just walk away...She is convinced that it was Tom that tried to kill her last night. I chased him onto the gallery, but I lost him..." Red shakes his head, and clinching his fist in frustration. "...He knows the baby is not his and he will not stop until he destroys her and her baby..." Red says, becoming more, and more vengeful as he thinks about it.

"...Marry her, Raymond...love her...protect her and your new daughter the best way that you can...That is the best we can hope for in this life...You have been given a second chance, Raymond...Don't throw it all away..."

"...You're right, Dembe...I have been selfish...She saw my scars and still wanted to make love to me...Elizabeth has always been a gift to me...I shouldn't have been so cowardice..."

"...We will deal with Tom Keen, Raymond..." assuring him, and just then He finds what they were looking for "...Raymond, I think I have found something..."

Red sets down his stack of papers and comes to see what Dembe has found "What is it?..."

Dembe hands him a Manila piece of paper. It is a handwritten receipt from Mr. Magoo's Magic Shoppe for 5 kilos of Oleander leaves, signed and paid for by Thomas Keen.

"Oh God, Dembe...Tom Keen is working with Rauchmann...That's how he found out about me and Lizzie and the baby..."

"There is also something written on the back, Raymond...It looks like a formula." Red flips the receipt over to find several words and numbers written in shorthand in pencil.

"It's a cake recipe..." Red says puzzled, as he tries to find the connection when he glances around the room to see the crib and bassinet in the corner, reminding him of how a plantation owner's wife and children were killed.

"Oh God No..." Red's face grows pale.

"What is it, Raymond?..." Dembe asks beginning to worry "...What is the Oleander for?..." Dembe asks.

"When the leaves are boiled they create a poison similar to arsenic..." Red explains and he hastily runs downstairs to find Elizabeth. He pulls out his burner phone as he sees Liz waiting for him and Dembe to return.

"Reddington, what's wrong?..." She asks.

"They are going to poison the King Cakes for Mardi Gras..." Red says as he dials a number on speed dial and puts it to his ear.

"Who is...Raymond?..." Liz demands an answer. Red hands her the receipt for her to see for herself. She is stunned but not surprised to see her husband's signature on the incriminating piece of paper.

"Oh God, Ray..."

Red lays his arm around her shoulders and gives her a kiss on the forehead. "It's ok, sweetheart...We have work to do, my love..." he whispers holding the phone to his ear, waiting for Cooper to answer.
"Reddington!..."
Chapter 9

“Harold...you old so and so?...” Raymond initiates his phone call to Cooper in his usual cheeky tone, just for the sake of annoying him. “...How are you?...How’s the wife?...”

“Reddington...Where the hell have you two been?...” Agent Cooper yells tired and irritable from spending the last 16 hours stranded at the Post Office blacksite; while the Nor’easter’s dangerous blizzard conditions have virtually shut down all forms of travel in the Nation’s Capital; and pretty much forcing the Task Force to spend the night there.

Cooper is in no particular mood for playing Red’s games, and is more concerned for the well-being of one of his top Agents; especially since she had been acting so strange and reclusive lately.

“...Where is Agent Keen?...We’ve all been worried sick about her...Her husband has been calling us frantic looking for her...”

Red’s eye twitches upon hearing those last words. He allows Harold to continue with his little assertive rant. “...If I find out that she’s been cavorting with you on the Island of Tahiti...I will have you both thrown into ‘The Box’ for your gross insubordination...”

"...Haha...Nice, Harold...” Red chuckles, “...She’s fine...I’ve been keeping her pretty busy...massaging my feet and refreshing my Martinis...” Elizabeth’s eyes get as big as marbles. She restrains herself from slapping him in the face, and realizing that he’s only teasing, she then covers her mouth in a muffled giggle.

Elizabeth moves to stand closer so that she can hear Cooper’s side of the conversation without Red having to put his phone on speaker, while standing on the street corner. She casually wraps her arms around him, resting her head on his shoulder. Raymond makes a subtle ‘Shhh’ gesture to her, and she responds with a nod of agreement, and closes her eyes to listen. Reddington continues speaking as he wraps his free arm around Lizzie’s back in a protective gesture. “...but seriously though, Harold...Agent Keen and I have been busy chasing a lead to a case...the details are a bit sensitive to discuss over the phone, and irrelevant for now to why I called...”

“...So; why did you call?...” Cooper asks in slightly calmer tone.

“...We need your help, Harold...What do you know about oleander?...” Reddington asks as he diverts the subject off of them.

“Nerium oleander is a shrub...a member of the dogbane family; Apocynaceae...” Cooper recalls from reading in one of his wife’s books on horticulture. Charlene is an avid gardener, and had once considered planting a couple in the back yard when the children were younger, but then had decided against it after discovering that... “...It’s toxic in all of its parts,...” he recites on the phone, “...and has been linked to many poisonings and suicides in Sri Lanka...It is mostly found in warmer coastal climates, as well as being popular in home gardening for its heartiness lovely hot pink flowers, and ironically most commonly found in schoolyards, which I don’t agree with...Why do you ask?...”

Agent Cooper is always leery of Reddington’s random questions; knowing that there is usually leads to a case pertaining a Blacklister involved.

“...Excellent, Harold...Are you also familiar with the murders of Judge Clark Woodruff’s wife and two of their daughters on Myrtles plantation in the 1823?...” Raymond continues asking.

“...Yes...” Cooper sighs, realizing he is getting nowhere fast in getting any quick answers from him. “...I am familiar with that tragic urban legend...One of servant slave girls who was a nanny to the
judge’s children had laced the a birthday cake with the poison, for fear that she would be sent to the fields, after being caught eavesdropping on the Woodruff’s business, and losing her ear for it...She had only planned to make them sick so she could nurse them back to health, and regain her standing with the judge...but her plan had backfired and within hours the two girls and their mother were dead...but Reddington...why are we speaking about ancient New Orleans history?...” He asks again becoming more irritated with Reddington’s tiptoeing around the subject.

“...Because history is...” Just then the loud distinct sound of the steamboat horn blows in the near distance. Raymond quickly tries to cover his phone, but Cooper had already recognized it, but decides not to mention it. After the sound past; Raymond pulls his hand away, a bit irritated himself at giving away their location, but finishes his statement “...Because history is about to repeat itself, Harold...and on a much grander scale...” Raymond declares.

“...Reddington...I’m not following...” Agent Cooper eases into the back of his office chair, giving Red his full attention “...How does this tie in with Ilsa Rauchmann’s death?...”

“...Nothing...” Red says, as he is delicately calculating what and how much to tell him without exposing Elizabeth to too much scrutiny.

“Reddington...I’m serious...If you don’t start giving me some answers, I will have to assume one of my Agents in cahoots with a master criminal, and hunt you both down...” Cooper Demands. Elizabeth could hear the anger in his voice on the other end, and looks at Raymond with worried eyes. He places his hand on her shoulder, giving her a comforting squeeze.

“...If you do, Harold...many people are going to die...” Reddington answers. Finding it unavoidable to convince Cooper of the imminent threat, unless he concedes to throw Harold another bone.

“...Fine...” Red sighs with a frown on his face “...As you know, Harold...Our Agent Keen has found herself a bit on edge for the last few weeks, and I convinced her that she needed a few days off in the sun...but since then; we had stumbled upon a heinous plot to incorporate the deadly toxin from oleander leaves into the prized colorful king cakes for the Mardi Gras celebrations next week...over a million innocent and drunken revelers will be taking part in this most bacchanal and indulging Festivals of the year...if he goes through with this plan...it will have the potential of delivering a mass of casualties throughout the entire Delta area...He must be stopped before Fat Tuesday...Harold...”

“...He?...Who?...” Agent Cooper’s voice is becoming impatient again. “...I swear Reddington...I’m about to blow a gasket if you don’t...”

“...No need in concerning yourself with who, Harold...Agent Keen and I are following up on a couple of leads...Just alert NOLA P.D. And the CDC to the looming culinary crisis about to befront the Crescent City...I doubt that they would take the threat seriously from me...”

“...No...no I guess you’re right...You are sure this threat is credible?...”

“...Positive...I know this man and what he is capable of...” Red hugs Elizabeth a little tighter while looking at her “...Unfortunately, he has ties to our Agent Keen so I’d rather not disclose his name for now...We’ll be in touch...”

“...Alright Reddington...Wait...Is Liz there?...Let me speak to Elizabeth...” Harold stops him from hanging up, still desperate for more answers. Liz's eyes widen with anxiety at the sound of Agent Cooper's voice coming through the little speaker on Raymond's burner phone, afraid of how explain all this to him. Luckily; Red doesn't give him the chance to explore that subject.

“...Later Harold...Agent Keen is currently experiencing an acute case of morning sickness...she’s having a lie down...She sends her love...” *Click.*
Red hangs up the phone, and smiles at Liz while slipping it back into his pocket. She breathes a sigh of relief; thankful for not having to talk to Cooper right now, but her eyes tell a different story. Raymond pulls her close and kisses her hair. “…It will be ok, Lizzie…I’m sure he doesn’t know about us…”

“…Oh, Red…I’m not worried about Cooper…” Elizabeth says as she holds him close. “…I’m worried that I won’t be able fight off Tom in my condition when we find him…”

“Don’t worry, Lizzie…I will take care of him…I realize now that your fears were sound, and mine were selfish…He will never hurt you or anyone else again…” he assures her.

“Raymond…They weren’t selfish…your fears are just as mine…but I’m willing to take that risk, and deal with it for the sake of what we have together…” Elizabeth takes Red’s hand and places it on her belly.

Red closes his eyes for a second to caress their child, and then leans in to kiss Liz on her brow. “I love you, Lizzie…You are braver than I realized…I was wrong to misjudge your strength…” He leans down to kiss Elizabeth softly on the lips.

What Red and Liz do not realize is that Tom Keen has been watching them from an upstairs window in the building across the street. He has a sniper rifle set up and trained on them. Although he is tempted to pull the trigger; Tom restrains himself and just to observes them through the scope; training it first on Dembe who is rubbing his neck, then shifting his aim directly on Red and Liz’s kiss that has grown more passionate. Tom’s eyes become emblazoned with jealousy. The thought crosses his mind to take a pic of them on his Galaxy phone, and send it to her boss, but considers that a bit cliché, and it wouldn’t be enough to hurt her.

He then trains his sight on to Reddington’s hand caressing His wife’s pregnant belly. Tom’s blood is boiling now. He had always known that the baby wasn’t his own, and he continues to torture himself by watching Reddington caress his own seed; gaining justification for what he is about to do.

Tom can no longer contain his jealousy. He takes aim at Elizabeth’s womb, hoping that the bullet will also pass through Red’s shooting hand, and take out their unborn child for good. “Reddington and his bitch don’t suspect a thing…One carefully placed shot would do it…” Tom thinks to himself, “…and justice would be served, babe…”

He begins to slowly squeeze the trigger, when he gets interrupted by a painful crick in his neck, making him scream and drop to the floor into the fetal position groaning in pain.

Dembe hears the noise and says “Raymond…I think we are being watched…”

Red reaches to his holster for his revolver, when Liz pushes Red away, and walks hastily up the street, with Red and Dembe chasing after her. Her hormones are racing out of control; her eyes darting all around in a frenzy; trying to stay perfectly aware of her surroundings. Elizabeth's pace begins to slow halfway up the block, as she begins to run short of breath for the extra babyweight that she is carrying. Liz's body is shaking, and she stands frozen in fear, when Raymond catches up with her just when she starts to cry. "I knew it..." She says frantically. "...He’s here....Tom...Oh God...Raymond...”

"Lizzie...You really shouldn’t be running like that...sweetheart...Please...calm yourself down, my
"...Listen to me, Elizabeth...Don't fall appart on me now...We are so close to being free from him..." Raymond's eyes are a dark and flaring green, which she would normally fear, if she hadn't been sharing in his anger for her husband's actions. “...I love you, Lizzie..."Raymond assures her; staring directly into Elizabeth's eyes "...We can do this, sweetheart...you and I...for us...and for her..."

Red's eyes soften as Elizabeth calms down, and he sees the courage and strength return to her eyes again. "...Yes, Raymond...thank you...I'Il be ok now..."

"...You're sure?..." Red asks once more for his own assurance.

Lizzie takes another deep breath, and nods with a definite "Yes..."

"Ok then...Let's go, Lizzie...Let’s go find your husband...It’s time we had a talk with Rauchmann...” Red tells her, calmly.

Elizabeth nods, smiles back at him; relieved knowing they are both now on the same page. She wraps her arms around Red’s neck in a hug, and glances over his shoulder, noticing Dembe standing there rubbing his neck. “Dembe...Your neck...”

Raymond turns around to notice; for even on his dark African skin; faint, but noticeable black bruises are beginning to appear on his throat. “...My God, Dembe...you’re neck...Madame’s apparition really did try to kill you...Let’s get you some ice to stop the bruising...”

“She must have thought that I was one of her slaves, Raymond...” Dembe deduces as he uses a store window as a mirror.

“...Yes...You were very lucky....my friend...let’s go...” Red says hastily. He places his hand in the small of Elizabeth’s back to move her along, while Dembe follows along behind them.

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They continue a stroll up the block on Governor Nicholls Street, to turn left on Bourbon Street. A short, and pudgy old barkeep stands outside his corner cafe having a smoke, and sipping on a cup of traditional French Roast coffee; which is told to be strong enough to grow hair on a young man’s chest.

Raymond asks the man, in French, for cup of ice for his friend, adding that he had he an strange misfortune with an bewitching young lady.

“Oui bien sûr, Monsieur...” (Yes, of course...) the man replies. He goes it less than a minute later comes back with a scoop full of ice wrapped in a cloth napkin “C'est bon, garde le.” (It’s ok, keep it.)

“Merci beaucoup.” (Thank you very much.)

“...Et pour Madame?...”(And for the Lady?)

“...What?...” Raymond and Dembe turn to look at Elizabeth’s neck; which at first glance appears normal, but at closer inspection Raymond discovers the dark red ligature marks forming around the base of her neck, peeking out from beneath her shirt collar. Like with Dembe’s; the bruises had taken a few hours to fully appear on the surface of the skin.
Liz’s eyes move nervously between the three men who are looking at her with concern. Not knowing a word of French; she has no idea what had just been said to each other. “Raymond?...What’s wrong?” she asks as she sees tears forming in Raymond’s horrified eyes.

Red comes closer and takes his hands to spread open the collar of her blouse. Raymond sees for the first time in the daylight, the full extent of Tom’s assault on his angel last night.

“Bastard...” is the only word he could say as he lightly strokes the heliotrope ring around her throat with his long fingers. His eyes turning a dark green with rage. His chest heaves with vengeance, and face turns red and becoming clammy with sweat.

“No!...” he cries as his legs get weak and nearly passes out onto the street. Elizabeth and Dembe catch Raymond before he falls and drag him into a private booth in the back corner of the café.

“Not again...”Elizabeth says, loosening his tie, and undoing the top button of his shirt. Dembe takes his pulse, and nods “...He’ll be fine, Elizabeth...”

“Oh, Raymond...sweetheart...baby...please wake up...” she says desperately. She kisses him on the face “...Reddington...Reddington...”

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“...Reddington!...Help Me...Please!...Red!...” Raymond heard her screams, and the violent commotion coming from the Rostova dacha and ran from the car as fast as he could to help. He burst through the door, and found Katerina lying lifeless on the floor with her husband standing over her like a hungry bear. “No!...” Raymond rushed to her side; “...Katerina?!...Katerina?!...” dropping to his knees, and lifting her into his arms. Her fiery red hair hung down his arm as her head drooped back revealing a dark bruising pattern around her neck. He tried desperately to revive her, but it was too late...her neck was broken. “...Constantine...What have you done?...She’s your wife...How could you do this to such a lovely delicate rose?...”

Constantine’s blue eyes were flaring and his breathing was intense as if he was truly enjoying watching Reddington in anguish. He had an angry sneer on his face, like a rabid junkyard dog as he spoke “...She was a slut...a whore, Reddington...you know that more than anyone...The results came back, Raymond...The bitch betrayed us both...She didn’t deserve to live to break another man’s heart...”

Raymond’s tears began to fall as he brushed her hair out of her face. He wanted to kiss her one more time, and intended to until the sight of the dark red contusions left him stunned. Red was just about to lightly stroke her skin when he heard the loud shrill of a baby cry. “Masha...No!...”

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The bar owner asks Dembe in French if he should call a doctor. Dembe tells him also in French that it isn’t necessary, just bring him some ice water and a glass of his finest Scotch, to which he agrees. “Oui bien sûr, monsieur...Immédiatement...” (Yes of course, sir...Immediately...)

Elizabeth unbuttons Reddington's shirt and vest to give him some more air; and recalling what had worked before; she then slowly unzips the fly of his trousers and reaches in to pull him out, stroking and fondling his length to get him to regain consciousness. Raymond's breath becomes low and deep. Liz continues to stroke him faster, making Red nice and hard with a strong and yearning erection.

"...I think he’s just in a trance again, Dembe..." Elizabeth says, noticing a deep expression of
melancholy on Red's face “...I wonder what triggered it...

“...Your wounds must have triggered a painful memory in Raymond's mind...Comfort him as I stand watch, Elizabeth...He is too vulnerable in this condition...” Dembe reinforces what she has already deducted.

"...That's my intention, Dembe...He's no good to us this way...” She says as she procrastinates pleasing him in public once again. Elizabeth stares hungrily at his solid thickness, beckoning her in a 'come hither' motion that is making her salivate.

Liz is about to take Raymond in her mouth when is interrupted, feeling a bit embarrassed when the bartender comes to the table with a tray carrying large pitcher of water, three glasses of large ice cubes, a full bottle of thirty-year single malt Scotch, and a couple of cloth napkins; setting all the items Dembe had requested on the table. Raymond starts to moan louder as he yearns to be tended to. Liz's face is beet red when the awkward little Frenchman nods graciously and smiles; leaving Liz to continue without protest. The man sighs, still smiling as he turns to walks away, uttering the words "Ahh, l'amour..." (Ah, love) and begins to whistle 'les Marseillaise' as he strolls happily back into the kitchen to prep for the busy lunch hour ahead.

Elizabeth blushes, but is also a bit amused at the whole scene; and takes it a badge of honour at this point; as she exchange a friendly smirk at Dembe, who is keeping lookout while holding the homemade ice pack to his neck. "...Give Raymond whatever he needs so we can stop your husband...” Dembe turns his back, and watches outside for anything suspicious, giving Elizabeth a little privacy while she works to rouse her man.

Elizabeth then refocuses her sights on her entranced, and helplessly aroused hero; becoming a little bolder; she inconspicuously slips her panties off from under her skirt before she leans down to slide Reddington's desperate aching member in and out of her mouth. “...Mmm, Raymond my love...” Liz whispers to him tasting his sweet saltiness on her tongue, "...Mmm...Wake up, honey...You don't want to miss what I am about to do to you..." she says, snaking her soft wet tongue around the crown of his cock, and getting more wet and aroused herself; getting up to straddle him between her legs.

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“...Ahhh...Masha...No!...” Red begins to come to, moaning and highly aroused “ Oh,...Constantine, you monster...Leave her alone!...Kate...Get her out of here!...Away from him...” Raymond’s body is bucking and is shouting raving mad. Lizzie has gotten so lost in pleasing his cock, that she doesn't even hear the words that he is saying.

“Oh,...Kate...Hurry!...He's crazy!...Take her...take Masha to her father...Ohhhh God...Lizzie?...Lizzie?...Where are you, sweetheart?...” Red is getting very close to coming, and he reaches down gripping her hair to hold her steady.

"...I'm right here, Raymond...I'm right here...” The pleasure for both of them is very intense as he gently thrusts his throbbing member into her mouth. “Ohhhh, Masha you've grown...Oh Lizzie...My Lizzie...my love...You belong to no one but me...Ahhh...I'm so sorry...I should've...I should have never let him get that close to you...He will never hurt you again...Oh Lizzie...Yess...Ahhhh...”

Elizabeth gasps as she pulls him out of her mouth. His sweet milky cum dripping down her chin.

“...Ohh...Raymond...Yes...You’re back, Baby...” she says happy and relieved to see his hungry eyes looking at her, and smiling with deep desire. Liz had been starting to get worried, because it had taken much longer to break him out of his trance this time than it had before.

He raises himself up; resting onto his elbows in the booth, he takes his finger to wipe some of his cup
off of her cheek. She stops him from pulling his hand away, and tenderly suck on his fingers and closing her eyes.

“...Oh, Lizzie...My sweet angel...” Raymond sqys to her tenderly, watching her savoring his fingertips. "...I must have done something right to deserve you...I couldn't save your mother...but I will never lose you again...Come here Lizzie...Come up here and kiss me...and tell me you love me...“

Her eyes lock with his, and she says, "I love you, Raymond...No matter what...We will win this...together..." Raymond then reaches out placing his hand gently behind her neck to pull her in for a warm and wet passionate kiss. Elizabeth closes her eyes and opens her mouth, inviting his tongue to invade her mouth and lap up all his own warm gooeyness that he had left so deliciously on her tongue and in her cheeks.

Elizabeth uses her hand to stroke his hot wet freestanding erection beckoning her in the breeze. Raymond slips his hand down to her sex to find that she is more than ready for him, and slides his fingers between her wet swollen lips caressing her softly, sliding a finger inside her. She breaks her kiss to moan and looks at him hungrily in the eyes. "...Oh Red...It's still early...please..."

"...Are you sure about this, Lizzie?...” He says with no actual concern. "...I mean...we are in public...we could get caught...."

"...Hahaha...Come on, Reddington...” she laughs scoffingly, “...Yesterday we did it in the back of your car, parked only two blocks from the White House...at lunch hour...”

Red gives her a delicious smirk, and pushes his silk/wool blend trousers and boxers down off of his buttocks, to just above his knees, so as not to get them soiled. He places his strong hands around Elizabeth’s waist; to support her weight, and lower her down onto his thick sturdy shaft. Raymond groans with a deep contentment to have her sweet heat engulfing his greatness, and the sound of her soft sighs ring like a lovely Classical Russian Adagio in his ears.

The awkwardness of the tight Booth, and the extra weight of their baby make it a bit more challenging for her to move and keep her balance, but she doesn’t seem to mind; feeling quite secure and comfortable there. Liz shifts her weight slightly to find her center, straddling him snugly between her thighs; her one leg curled under on the vinyl covered bench, and the other straightened; her foot planted firmly, bracing herself on the floor. Raymond then watches Lizzie's every move. His eyes light up as she unbuttons the top three buttons of her blouse, revealing the cleavage of her red lace bra; which unfortunately also exposes the dark black and blues around her neck. Red’s eyes begin tearing up, and he reaches to touch them, but Elizabeth stops him and brushes his hand away.

Surprised; Raymond raises an eyebrow, and Liz takes a single cube of ice from one of the glasses sitting on the table, and holds it against the discoloration on her neck. The heat from her aroused body causes the ice to start melting very quickly; melting a trail down her throat, passing down the center of her collar bone, and gets lost down the cleavage between her luscious full breasts.

Reddington's sadness also melts away as he is now entranced watching the trajectory of each and every drop of water serpentining down her chest. His lip begins to twitch with desire, and he begins to feel a burning fire coming from his testicles to which he can no longer contain.

Raymond moistens his lips and rushes forward to devour Elizabeth’s neck in hot smoldering kisses, and embraces her tightly, desperately touching her everywhere like a horny adolescent. “...Aww, Lizzie...please...Don’t leave me hanging, sweetheart...”
Liz smiles and takes another two ice cubes from the glass and feeds them suggestively into Raymond’s mouth, whispering softly to him “Your turn, Mr. Reddington...”

He responds with a devilish grin; twirling the ice around his tongue to keep the cubes from melting too quickly. Raymond loosens his embrace and kisses each dark wound with quick precision trying to repair what her husband tried to destroy. Raymond glides his lips on Elizabeth’s neck and throat, allowing the melted drops of water to trickle down the contours of her throat, down her delicious décolleté, and fall beautifully onto her plump soft breasts; nestled inside her delicate red lace bra. “Oh, yes...Raymond...” Elizabeth moans softly; rolling her her eyes and head back, feeling a light tingling from the coolness of his chilled breath. Raymond's head bends down connecting his moist cold lips with her soft and supple breasts. “...That feels beautiful...”

Red quickly sneaks another wet cube of ice into his mouth and gently pulls down the front of her bra, exposing her firm and perky nipples. He leans down to kiss and suckle each of her meaty pink nubs, holding the melting cube between his teeth, making them both harden and stand up on end.

"Ahh...Raymond..." She gasps, feeling his icy cold chill dripping down onto her sensitive teats, making her sqirm and shake on his lap. He moves his lips quickly from one breast to the other, for the ice is melting fast The icy sensation travels down Lizzie’s spine causing a chain reaction in her body; arching her back; bucking her hips, and tightening the muscles that are constricting fully around his magic wand.

"...Ahh yes...Oh Raymond...please...fuck me now..." Liz knows that she is about to unleash the vengeful beast in Reddington's groin.

“...Ohhh God, Lizzie...Yess...” Raymond groans, with a burning fire to fuck her hard and fast, but his thrusts are slowed by Elizabeth's sensual squeeze; elevating his pleasure to a higher plateau of lengthened ecstasy, sending him into the early stages of a most satisfying orgasm for him. Elizabeth braces herself to hold her balance, planting her hands on his strong shoulders. She smiles moving her hips a little faster, milking his erection with her strong pubic muscles in long smooth strokes.

"...Awww, Lizzie...I'm in heaven...I want this to never end..." Reddington rolls his head back and reaches his hands underneath her skirt, grabbing a firm hold of her soft derrière. "...Oh girl...your buns are deceiving...So soft...and Oh!...so strong..." Raymond strains to keep it together, moving with her; she rests her bump on his belly, as she slides her hips faster up and down to tease his pole to a point to where they both feel as though they are about to explode. "...No Lizzie...Not so quickly...make this please last forever..." he begs.

"...Oh, Raymond I wish I could...Ohhh...but I can't...knowing Tom is out there...somewhere...hungry for blood...Ahhh..." Elizabeth feels his burning fury building in his hot swelling cock "...He must be stopped..." she says looking at him; the fear returning to her eyes.

Reddington's eyes are now flaring with rage at the shuddering in her voice as he mentions his name a green fire. Elizabeth knows that look and braces herself for impact, by grabbing a tight hold of his shoulders, "...You're right, Lizzie...Let's finish this...Ahhh...Hold on, sweetheart..." Red suddenly bucks her wildly like a bronco unleashing a hot wave of milk and honey into her. "...Owww!..." She shrieks, sending her deep over the edge of fiery bliss. "Yes...Yes...Yessss...Ohhh Reddingtonnnn."

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Feeling quite satisfied with her abilities; Elizabeth dismounts her man and picks up her panties up off the floor. Raymond's tongue rolls over his lips; not hiding the fact that he is still watching her as she slips her panties back on under her skirt, also quite proud of having a someone who is willing to risk her own reputation for him. Cocking his head and smiling; he feels very blessed, and realizes that he would do absolutely anything to protect that woman. Red pulls up his pants and buckles his black leather belt.

She shakes her shirt collar; that along with her bra are still damp from the melted ice. She now regrets not removing them first; doubting Reddington would have minded, but NOLA P.D. might have wanted to have a say about it, if they had happened to have been passing by at the time.

Liz smiles and makes a gesture, and Raymond returns it with a nod, and hands her her purse. She quickly takes a run to the ladies room, hoping that maybe she might find a hot air hand drier there to dry them under, but she only finds a roll of comercial grade paper towels in a hand crank dispenser. "...I guess this will have to do..." Elizabeth says out loud, cranking the little lever rapidly, and ripping off a long piece of the paper towel and wadding it up in her hands to try and pat her shirt dry.

Elizabeth looks up and catches a glimpse of the wound on her neck in the large vanity mirror over the sink. She is stunned at first, at the sight of the ugly ligature marks staring back at her. Liz draws closer to the mirror, and spreads her shirt collar open a little wider to study the study full extent of her injury .

"Aww...My God...Tom!...You Fucking Son of a Bitch!..." Elizabeth mutters as she runs her hand along the line of dark purple bruising, and moves her head around to find a better angle in that dim bathroom lighting. "...You're not going to get away with this...".

She decides to take her iPhone out of her purse, and snap a couple pics of her injuries. She then sends them in a text to Agent Donald Ressler's phone with only the word "tom...don't tell cooper...". It takes less than a minute for Liz to receive a response from him.

*bzzz* "OMG..."
*bzzz* "...asshole..."
*bzzz* "...cooper knows...got ur back keen..."
*bzzz* "...good luck with R ;)"

Liz texts him back. "thanx...L8tr :P..."

She locks the screen and places the phone back in her purse; feeling a bit better about having allies at the Task Force for when she eventually has to deal with Cooper. It won't be easy explaining her relationship with Red...and the baby...but this will help at least explain her state of mind, and hopefully keep her new family out of prison. Her mind is running circles around itself trying to process it all, and her hormones aren't helping her any.

Elizabeth buttons up her shirt all the way, and raises the collar up as far as she can to try and cover her wound. She fluffs up her hair, and reapplies her favorite shade of lipstick. Taking a deep breath, and resting her hands on her unborn child; she looks at herself with renewed confidence and determination.

Speaking to her reflection in the mirror; her fear begins to disipate as her eyes now fill with vengeance and scorn for the man she once loved and trusted. "...You better run, Tom...Reddington and I are coming for you...I love him...You will not destroy my family..." After concluding her little pep talk to herself, Elizabeth opens the door and leaves with her held high to rejoin Raymond and Dembe.
Raymond has been finishing getting dressed while she's gone, and straightening his silk burgundy Ermenegildo Zegna tie. He then smooths out the wrinkles in the fabric of his grey three piece suit so as not to look disheveled when Elizabeth returns. He takes a seat at the booth and pours himself a couple thumbs of Scotch.

Raymond takes a generous sip of the warm comforting liquid, staring at his glass as feels the burn of the fine Highland Malt Whiskey slide slowly down his throat. He looks around at the other items left on the table. The ice in the two glasses have all since melted, and he picks up one of the cloth napkins and dabs the sweat off of his brow, a clear harbinger to the midday humidity, and that they should be moving along before the lunch crowd begins to dribble in.

Elizabeth quickly returns to the table, and indicates to Reddington that his fly is still open.

"Oops..." he says grinning unapologetically, and zips it up. "...I thought he needed a little air after what you did to him..."

"...Oh God Red...That was amazing...Please poor me a drink..." Liz says with an adorable smile.

"...Lizzie...You're pregnant..." he reminds her.

"...Ah,...Yeah right...water then..." Liz says slightly disappointed and slides in next to him in the booth.

"...I had Pierre bringing us a fresh pitcher and a little brunch...I'm starving, and I'm sure you are too..." Red says smiling, and caressing her hand. "...You need to keep your strength up..."

"...Yes, thank you...That sounds lovely...Pierre?...You know him?..." she asks.

"...I do...There are eyes and ears everywhere, Lizzie...I've made it a habit to keep as many of them as I can on my side...It's how I've survived all these years...Ahh, Merci Pierre"

"...Mon plaisir, monsieur Reddington...Je les ai fait cuire frais ce matin..." (My pleasure, Mr. Reddington...I baked them fresh this morning.) He says proudly as he sets down two small plates. On them each plate holds a giant golden flakey Croissant alongside a knife and two small saucers containing a generous serving of ice chilled butter and apricot orange marmalade.

"...très magnifique...Merci beaucoup." (magnificent...thank you very much) Red says as he hands the man a fresh folded hundred dollar bill for his troubles.

"...Ah...Merci, monsieur...Café madame?..." Pierre bows appreciatively, and offers to bring Liz a coffee, which she decides to pass on by shaking her head and smiling at him. He bows graciously and bids them "...Bon appétit..." before heading back behind the bar to dry some glasses; leaving them to enjoy their meal.

"Mmmm...Oh, Red...this is amazing..." Elizabeth says as she bites into the steaming hot French pastry. "...So soft and buttery...wow and what is that amazing jam?..." she asks she doesn't realize that she has a large blob of marmalade on the tip on the tip of her nose.

Reddington smiles and giggles at her expense, and leans in towards her. His eyes focused on hers and with a little smirk on his face; he surprises her with a flick of his tongue licking it off her nose and finishing with a soft kiss on the tip of her nose. "...I think orange with a hint of apricot...or is it
the other way around?..." He says softly, keeping his eyes shut for a moment.

"...It doesn't matter, Raymond...it's delicious...like you..." Lizzie can't believe she actually made him blush just now. Feeling kind of impressed with herself; Liz tantalizes him by adding more marmalade to her small piece of pastry that she finishes without dropping it all over herself again.

Red finishes his glass of Scotch, and pours himself just a tiny bit more into the glass. Dembe comes towards their table and places a large folded brown and gold silk Chanel scarf in front of her. "Here Elizabeth,... Raymond asked me to get this for you..."

"Thank you...that's very kind of you...It's beautiful..." she says as she unfolds the luxurious designer scarf and admires the nautical golden chain pattern with brown border; feeling the soft silken fabric between her fingers. Raymond reaches over, and undoes the top two buttons on her blouse, and loosens up her collar. His twitch appears at the sight of her wounds again, but his anger is distracted by the calmness in Lizzie's smile.

Reddington takes the scarf, and folds on the diagonal. He rolls it up, and wraps it around her neck, tying it in a loose bow. "...There...How is that?..." He says with a big smile, covering the marks completely. "Is it too tight, sweetheart?...Does it hurt?..."

"...No, Raymond...I'm fine, thank you very much..." Elizabeth says with a sigh of relief, and takes a generous of her water.

Becoming serious again he says "...So, who did you text those pictures to?...Aram?..."

"...No...Ressler..." Liz answers, then asks surprised "Wait...Were you eavesdropping on me?..."

"...Haha...no...not exactly...These walls are thin...I just overheard..." easing her mind.

"...Sorry..." Elizabeth says; regretting not telling him right away "...I wasn't trying to..."

"...Lizzie...you were wise to do so..." Raymond interrupts her in mid sentence. "...May I see what you sent...Lizzie?..." She solemnly nods and takes her phone out of her purse; turns it on, and opens up the Messenger to the their conversation. She looks sadly at the pictures that she had taken and the texts following them. Liz sighs and hands her phone to Raymond; who is silent for a moment as he studies it.

Elizabeth bites her lip awaiting his reaction; her eyes moving nervously back and forth between her IPhone and his eyes. Red finally smiles and looks up at Liz, and hands it back to her. "Well?..." she asks anxiously.

Reddington takes her hand in his and gives it a gentle kiss, and smiles even bigger. "...Well done, sweetheart...You opened the door for us..." Elizabeth breathes a sigh of relief, and listens to Raymond's theory.

"...Donald has always been the upstanding 'White Knight' that I always hoped to be...always playing it by the book, and he will surely divulge these with Cooper to do his good deed...with the evidence of your husband's actions before him...your past behavior will be warranted as that of a typical battered wife...that of self-preservation and survival, finding refuge in someone that you had deemed as your protector considered perfectly natural, and beyond your control..."

Liz shrugs her shoulders and says, "...Battered Wife Syndrome...Hmm...Not my perception of choice, but if it keeps us together, Raymond...I can live with that..."

Reddington is pleased to hear that. He emphasizes "...acting out in fear, anger, and hungry for
justice...you were seeking a safe haven under my protection...and your child became a product of seeking that comfort and refuge..."

"...We fell in love...No, Raymond...I will not underscore my feelings for you...not to Cooper..." Elizabeth says with full conviction "...I am not afraid to tell him that I love you...I will take whatever consequences he wishes to impart on me...as long as we expose Tom for what he is..."

"...And stop him from harming anyone else...It's time to go, Lizzie...Time to see Mr. Magi..." Red concludes as he throws back his last swallow of Scotch, and cringes satisfactorily at the burn. He leaves another Benjamin under the empty bottle, and he and Liz both depart, with Dembe continuing their way up Bourbon Street towards their destination.
Chapter 10

The air becomes heavier as the morning rolls on into midday. The rising humidity from the surrounding swamps and bayous give the atmosphere an eerie hazy appearance.

Elizabeth is beginning to get a bit weary from the long walk. Her and Reddington have been walking for what seems like all morning, and her feet are beginning to feel the pressure. Reddington finds a bench for them to sit; giving her a chance to rest her dogs, and think about their next course of action while also enjoying a little people watching.

Raymond sits down beside Liz on a wooden park bench, and convinces Liz to take off her shoes and allow him to massage feet for a second or two. "Oh thank you, Red...I just need a second's rest...How much further?..."

"...Not far...Another block, I think..." he says slipping off her medium heal pumps, laying them on the bench, and resting her ankles on his thigh while massaging her tender feet. She sighs and watches him lovingly kneading the tension from her sore arches and heels. "...I should have had Dembe rent us a car..." Raymond regrets "I didn't realize how much walking this would be for you in you're condition..."

"...Don't worry about it, Ray...there wasn't time...I just wanted to get out of that place..." she says contently, catching a whiff of a flower that she does not recognize "...Raymond...What is that lovely scent I smell?..."

"...Magnolia blossoms...We aren't far from St. Peter's Square..." Red says "...I will take you later if you'd like..."He continues to massage the swollen balls of her feet with his strong thumbs, enjoying listening to her moan and sigh with relief. "...How's that, Lizzie?...Better?..."

"...Oh yes, thank you, Ray...much better...I'd like that a lot..." she smiles at Red as he carefully replaces the shoes back onto her feet. "...Maybe we can have a picnic there after this is all over, Raymond...but first we need to find out what Tom is up to..."

"Deal!...It's a date, my love..." Red agrees, rising up he extends his hand like the true gentleman that he is to help Liz stand, and she hooks her arm around his as they continue on walking together turning down St. Peter Street towards the park with Dembe close behind keeping a tight vigilance of their surroundings.

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Turning onto Royal Street; Elizabeth catches the harsh stench of fermenting hops and barley emanating from Jax Brewery; that which is stands proudly just on the banks of the Mississippi just, less than a mile away. They are working extra shifts to get their iconic local lager ready for the most indulgent day of the year. A strange intoxicating feeling comes over Elizabeth making her feel a bit lightheaded and faint. She clutches onto Reddington's arm a little tighter.

"Are you alright, Lizzie?...Do you need to rest?..." Raymond stops and asks; noticing her unease. He wraps his arm around Elizabeth's waist to steady her until the temporary dizzying feeling decides to pass.

"...No I'm alright...This humidity is just getting to me a little bit...I'm fine, really...Thank you for catching me...everything was spinning there for a second..." Elizabeth says, focusing on Ray's green eyes as a focal point. She quickly regains her equilibrium and tightens her grip around Red's arm,
and rests her head lightly on his shoulder.

"...You'll be fine, sweetheart..." Raymond whispers, and gives her a gentle kiss on the forehead while they continue along Royal Street.

"...I remember when my ex wife was pregnant...” he lightly recalls “...she couldn't take this weather very long either..." Reddington pauses to fight back more painful memories of the past. Looking down compassionately at Elizabeth nuzzling up against him; Raymond reminds himself of the beautiful opportunities before him; and the second chance that he has been given at a fresh and clean start with the woman that he has loved for all her life. He allows those painful old memories to finally pass, and reasserts to himself his cause to give Elizabeth and their child the life that they deserve; free of the fear, ridicule, and pain that Tom has bound her with.

Reddington silently vows again to himself to never let any of that ever happen again to his new family. Without voicing his thoughts, Red holds her closer to him, mostly to console himself more than her. "...We're almost there, Lizzie...I think it's just past here..."

Raymond points out the stately historical eighteenth century buildings, with their beautifully decorated wrought iron galleries, all adorned with balloons, flags, and tri-coloured swags in gold, purple, and green.

Just around the corner of Toulouse and Royal Streets; Red and Liz finally walk up to Hoodoo Magoo's Magic Shoppe. It is a cozy little 'hole-in-the-wall' boutique, in the spiritual heart and center for all things Voodoo in the Mississippi Delta area. Hoodoo Magoo's has the appearance of just another crowded little curiosity shop, but in reality it is like a museum of African and Creole culture.

Elizabeth looks in awe by the vast array of relics, artifacts, and talisman adorning the walls, and gets a little spooked by all the ornately carved masks hanging eerily from every corner of the ceiling staring back at her. Reddington leans in to read the rustic old labels on the tiny apothecary bottles filled with potions and jars of exotic herbs, stacked in long rows on the tall wooden bookshelf, between two equally as tall filled with ancient worn leather-bound spell books and Grimoires for faithful practitioners a and curious tourists the like. The strong blend of Nag Champa and Frankincense smoking from the several incense burners placed around the store, creating a truly calming and comforting effect on anyone who enters the quaint little shop.

A large male black cat with piercing green eyes, and a stern discerning look comes up out of nowhere to greet them. He is sporting a dark purple collar with a small terminated clear quartz crystal dangling from it. Seeming quite friendly and eager to make new friends; the shiny sleek black feline glares up at the new arrivals; meowing and circling and checking them all out in his own catlike way by rubbing up against Elizabeth's ankles, taking a figure eight pattern between Reddington's legs, arching his back while brushing against his trousers, and purring loudly, moving along and reaching up, stretching and digging his front claws into the knees of Dembe's cargo jeans. The mysterious little creature; now content, struts away with his tail in the air behind the counter, where a loosely folded blanket is rolled up in the shape of a bed on the bottom shelf of one of the heavy bookcases behind the counter.

Red and Liz wander around continuing to look around, hoping to catch the attention of someone in the store who works there besides the cat. Raymond is amused by a series of handpainted resin figurines in a lighted glass display case of skeleton couples poised in several erotic positions; all identically inscribed with the words 'Love Never Dies' on their bases. He rolls his tongue in his cheek with thoughts of that would be him and Lizzie someday and he looks on to a stand sitting on the counter with rather macabre looking handmade jewelry.
Red’s eyes are particularly drawn to one strangely attractive pair of earrings. Miniature versions of one of the masks that are hanging on the wall; crudely made of bronze and oxidized silver, along with Turquoise carved skull beads, and fine copper wire wrapped around an uncut Clear Quartz crystal. He takes them and holds them up to Elizabeth’s ear.

"...Wow Raymond...Well...How do they look?..." Liz asks curiously, unable to find a mirror anywhere near to see for herself.

Raymond smiles, and angles his head, "...I think they look beautiful...Fit for the queen that you are, my dear..." he tells her. Elizabeth smiles blushingly, and bites her bottom lip; realizing that he is looking more into her eyes than at the odd piece of jewelry.

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"Take them..." A deep raspy woman's voice speaking with an accent comes from a hidden corner near the back, "...They are our Voodoo god 'Ghede'...He will protect you both, and your child from the evils that is surrounding you..."

A tall, medium complexioned Haitian woman of a strong build in her late forties appears from behind a wall of ceremonial masks. She walks with an air of confidence, elegance, and grace; wearing a traditional blue quadrille dress, large golden hoop earrings, and a scarlet red headscarf wrapped around her hair and tied in an ornate bow offset in the front.

"Oh, Hello...How much, good woman?..." Red inquires, removing his fedora to greet the mysterious woman.

"Nothing brother...The spirits speak to me loud and clear...They are a gift to you with my compliments..."

"...And you are?..." Liz asks with a slight quiver in her voice as the attractive Creole woman approaches.

"...I am Madame Esther Cadeau...Third generation High Priestess, lifelong practitioner of Voodoo, and the owner of this peaceful boutique; open for those who walk in the faith can come to be fulfilled with the gods' shining light...You have come seeking help..."

"...Yes...Information...Is Mr. Magi in?..." Red says, confirming her inferral.

"...He is..." says she in a monotone voice "...He is in The Sanctuary...praying...He is expecting you...Raymond...but proceed with caution, Brother...the path is guarded..."

"...Thank you, my dear...I appreciate it..." nodding satisfactorily. He turns to Elizabeth, who is still struggling with the tiny earring backs to put them on; Red lends her a hand with the second one, and admires her in them.

"...They go beautifully with your eyes, Lizzie..." Raymond gives Liz an affectionate little kiss on the brow, and whispering in her ear "...I won't be long, sweetheart...You'll be alright here for a couple minutes, won't you?..."

"...Yes...I'll be fine...go ahead...I'll wait for you..." she says as he kisses her again, and heads for the back of the store. Liz stops him before he passes through the beaded curtains, calling out, "...Red!...please...don't kill him...He's not the one we're after..."

"...I know, Lizzie..." He says with a compassionate smile, and turns to Dembe and says "...Dembe stay with her..." as he passes through the curtain.
Reddington passes through a short hallway that is lit by only the red letters of the EXIT sign near the back. He discovers a red inverted pentagram painted crudely on a narrow wooden door with cracked green paint left unlocked and slightly ajar hidden away beneath the stairs.

At first glance, it could be had passed off as just a broom closet if not for an eerie orange glow of light coming from underneath the door. Raymond pauses briefly; reaching behind his back to pull out his Colt 1911 semi-auto tucked away in his holster just as a precaution. He pushes the door open a little further with the back of his hand; wincing at the loud creaking sound it makes; preferring not to alert who or whatever is back there of his presence. The deep orange flickering glow is coming from a distance, and barely illuminating a dark set of stairs that is leading underground.

Elizabeth; in the meantime; is left standing there a bit awkwardly in the middle of a store that is still kind of giving her the heebie-jeebies. She decides to pass the time by flipping through some of the dusty old books on the shelves while she waits for Red to return.

Madame Cadeau observes her carefully; reading her body language, and getting acquainted with her on a higher plane.

Raymond slowly and cautiously follows the path down the staircase into a dark passageway where there is an intense eeriness to this place, resembling that of the paths inside an ancient Egyptian tomb, and just as mysterious. Red inches down the narrow pathway following the orange flickering light; holding his gun in a ready position in front of him; his eyes held open wide and alert like a cat stalking the night. A single bead of sweat trickles down the side of his temple as his heart begins to race. He becomes more and more uneasy with each step down deeper into this underground sanctum. He regrets deciding to go it alone; thinking that’s fact alone of a place having a basement in a city where they can’t even bury their dead is defiant in all the laws of physics, and is in itself...a paranormal and unholy verity.

Moving closer towards what appears to be a doorway at the end of the passage; Red’s eyes still struggling to adjust to the darkness. He is met with a strong and somewhat familiar odor fills the small and confined space of the narrow passageway. A putrid smell of death; a scent that Raymond is no stranger of, but in such a claustrophobic arena, its strong and abrasive odor is starting to have a real nauseating effect on him.

Reddington’s head gets filled with dizzying images of war and death. His left eye twitches as he tries to shake off those thoughts realizes that it must be some kind of a trap, and he presses on to try and locate the source.

A tiny incense cone called Brimstone is to blame; smoking in a small stone vessel shrouded by the darkness, and sitting nearly undetectable on the floor halfway down the passage. It is powerful and offensive scent similar to that of burning, and rotting flesh, meant to induce hallucinations, and intense crippling thoughts of fear and terror in those not conditioned to working with its strong odor. It had been set there by Mr. Magi as a boobytrap to protect The Sanctuary from curious nonbelievers and to test Reddington’s strength and determination in his conquest into the dark spiritual unknown.

Red continues on the best he can to try to reach The Sanctuary, but is now becoming overcome by the sinister vapors, and fully under its influence. It is too overwhelming for Raymond to go on. His breathing becomes heavy and uneven, and his face becomes drenched with sweat.
Raymond’s mind is turning horrific tricks. His eyes look terrified at that doorway at what he thinks are angry raging flames surrounding a ghostly figure of Tom Keen carrying an unconscious Elizabeth in his arms, and disappearing into the inferno. “Tom...Stop!...Please...Lizzie...No!...” He cries, his voice barely audible and able to speak. Red’s body temporarily paralyzed under the incense’s powerful spell with a rush of fear surging through his veins, making him believe that he is about to enter into the gates of hell itself. He drops down to his hands and knees as his head feels like it’s about to explode.

Giant tears then trickle painfully down Raymond’s cheek. He whispers what he believes to be a final plea before facing Lucifer himself, “Lizzie...Oh, Lizzie...If I lose my fight to face Beelzebub himself...please know that I love you...and our child...forever...”

Liz all of a sudden drops the book she is reading, and grabs onto the bookcase; groaning and breathing heavy “Raymond?...” she gasps in a frightened voice. Dembe rushes to catch her, as she experiences a harsh pain in stomach, feeling like an early contraction, and making her knees weak. “...Oww...Raymond?...What’s happening?...Where is he?...”

“Calm yourself, child...Your lover’s mind is in distress...” Madame Cadeau says as she slides a chair over for her to take a seat and hands her a newspaper to fan herself with. “...do not worry, Elizabeth...It is only temporary...Your man is strong enough to endure Dieter’s cheap tricks...”

Liz fans herself with the newspaper, looking at the woman slightly upset at her directness of calling Raymond her lover straight out of the gate, even though it’s true; but more so of the thought of him in danger. Dembe glances down at her, wishing he had defied his wish to stay behind to back him up, and rests his strong black hand on her shoulder. A tear falls as Elizabeth closes her eyes, whispering a mental message back to him “...I love you too, Raymond...”

All of a sudden; as if someone had taken a cover to smothered it; the smoldering incense suddenly burns out. Raymond’s breath relaxes and calms almost instantly, and his heart rate slows back to a normal pace. He opens up his eyes, and looks all around him to discover that there was no one there.

Getting reacquainted with his surroundings now that the Brimstone’s influences have subsided and passed; Reddington stands up and straightens himself up. He takes a deep breath as the air clears; and picks his gun up off the floor, and continues on his way.

Marching on, irritated and upset for the delay; Reddington finally comes up to the doorway leading into The Sanctuary; stopping in front of the entrance to ready his gun for any other unpleasant surprise. He enters cautiously into what appears to be a large almost catacomb-like circular room; illuminated by only the fiery glow of ceremonial candlelight. Raymond scans around the bat cave like room, oddly resembling an old Victorian-style operating theatre from some bygone era, consisting of a small round amphitheater with a metal railing around steps leading down into a circular staging area for what might have formerly used for conducting surgical experiments, and performing routine medical procedures, aimed to teach young medical students in the nineteenth century. Those days long since gone with the dawn of modern medicine during World War I. Secret Amphitheaters such as these had since been abandoned, or have been repurposed for religious or occult worship, cult and clandestine rituals and rites, or peaceful places meditation and spellbinding.

Reddington steps deeper into the cryptic little sanctum, finding a shamanistic looking long grey-
bearded man with round wire-rimmed spectacles sitting in the center of the pit appearing lost in his own deep meditation.

Dieter Rauchmann; the Blacklister known as 'The Mesmerist', now calling himself Mr. Magi; sits cross legged in a full lotus position; meditating in front of an alter set up in the center of the recessed circle. Red decides to approach slowly and as quietly as he can with his gun aimed towards the floor attempting to regain the upper hand after what he had just been through.

Raymond paces gingerly along the narrow path that borders the circular pit, and between a multitude of tiny flames dancing on the tips of hundreds of tall red wick candles set in a row of tall wrought iron candelabras lining the outer edge of the path, creating the appearance of that ring of fire along the outer walls of of this secret underground temple.

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Liz keeps glancing anxiously at the African beaded curtain, fanning herself while waiting for "...Elizabeth, dear child...permit me..." The Voodoo Priestess lays her hands upon Elizabeth’s belly and chants a Creole incantation with her eyes closed. Less than a moment later, she begins to speak. "Oh...Hello Agnes...Speak to me little one..."

"...Agnes?..." Liz says puzzled.

"...Yes...That is the name that she will be given...Please,...allow her to speak..." she declares and closes her eyes. Elizabeth looks at Dembe skeptical; but nonetheless allows the woman to continue.

She is silent for another moment, and then says "...Aww,...poor dear...Agnes tells me she is afraid...very afraid...afraid of the devil...that comes to harm her...she fears the devil man..." she then chants again in her native language, and takes her hand away.

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Reddington hugs alongside the metal pipe railing, walking along the narrow path so as not to bump any of the large candelabras around the wall, which would have a devastating effect in such a small enclosed space.

He observes Rauchmann’s elaborate gestures, raising up a small stone vessel, and gazing up to the ceiling, while performing some kind of ceremonial ritual in front of a makeshift alter set up in the center circle comprising of a red velvet cloth draped over an old leather-covered steam trunk. One well-used purple pillar candle sets unlit on the left hand side, and a single stick of a sweet musky incense smokes tranquilly, like a solitary cigarette resting in an empty ashtray, on the right.

Dieter pulls a raw icy piece of clear crystal quartz out of his pocket and clutches it tightly in his hand to absorb it’s mystical energy. Raymond watches silently as he places the crystal down onto the velvet cloth, and strikes a match to light the candle.

"...Greetings Reddington..." The man begins speaking in his natural German brogue. His voice is as deep and maniacal as a James Bond villain. His words are spoken slow and calculated, lighting the candle and extinguishes the match. "...I have been expecting you...You are obviously not here to kill me...so what is the purpose of your visit, Raymond?..."

"...Don't play the fool, Rauchmann...I think you know quite well why I'm here..." Raymond says as he comes around nearly face to face with the mysterious man, resting his elbows on the railing and letting his gun droop, and noticing Dieter with some old tarot cards being laid out in a classic "Celtic Cross" spread before him.
“...Funny you should say that I think it is you who are playing The Fool...Reddington...” he says while pulling The Fool Card from the deck and lays it down in the center of the of the cloth over The Magician Card that is already placed there as the ‘Significator’ for the reading he decides to do for Reddington and his lover.

"...Ach...Die Fräulein...yes...You have been through heaven and hell with her...” indicated by the surrounding cards of The Lovers, and the The Tower Card placed below and to the right in the recent and distant ‘Past’ positions of the spread.

“...No thanks to you, Dieter...Whatever you did to us...We want it undone...” Raymond says with an angry tone.

“...You are a fool, Reddington...The past can not be undone...” He answers insulted at his demand. “...As I told your man...err woman...Herr Kaplan...there are no guarantees, and no refunds when the heart is involved...and that young man that you sent to me...he...he was one of the rare ones...” speaking as he draws The Devil Card from the deck and crosses it over the two cards already placed “...his mind could not be hypnotized...his mind was too strong...”

"...Wait...What man?..." Red says stunned and confused to by those words.

"...You're lover's husband..." He answers. "...Herr Kaplan brought him to me to make him believe that there was nothing between you and his wife...and to convince him that the child was his...but his mind had been trained to resist my suggestion..."

"Tom..." Reddington mutters. His face is fuming. At this point; his self-control is truly being tested. "...Damn..."

Confused by Madame Cadeau’s strange an eerie words; Liz continues fanning herself with the newspaper giving her some relief from the building humidity. Sighing and wondering when Raymond will return; she sets the paper down on her lap, and glances over; for just for boredom’s sake; at what appears to be the events page of the local New Orleans Tribune. Elizabeth gasps; shocked at seeing an article headline that reads...

"Local Entrepreneur, Leo Finster To Attend Charity Masquerade Ball For Battered Women..."

The photo accompanying the article gives Elizabeth chills.

"...Tom?!?...God, No..." Elizabeth says in a panic. “...Where’s Reddington?...What have you done with him?...” She suddenly becomes very apprehensive, and is talking at about a hundred miles a minute, directing her suspicion at her. "...Who are you?...What are you?...Some kind of Witch Doctor?...How do you know about my husband?..."

"Calm yourself child...There is no sorcery here..." Madame Cladeau explains "...Our religion is based on the power of belief, and the power of prayer...for the most part a peaceful one...There are those who perform dark rituals to please their own satanic idols under the guise of Voodoo...casting a dark shadow over our religion and our culture...Those who seek out that kind of black magic is not welcome here...

Those words seemed to do little to calm Elizabeth's anxiety, but Madame Esther continues to explain, "I am but a medicine woman...Elizabeth...I was born with the sight from which I inherited from my mothers blood...I was taught the art of spiritual and physical healing...and I know you and your lover are in pain...How is your neck, Elizabeth?...Let me see what your cruel husband has done to you..."
Liz Looks at Dembe, and lowers her head in shame, untying her scarf exposing the wound around her neck, beginning to cry.

"...Oh child...Curse that devil to smolder in the cool embers of hell..." Madame Esther’s eyes become enflamed with disgust. "...I have a potion that will take away those marks quickly..." She convinces Elizabeth to cast her skepticism aside for a little bit to find out more about Tom, that could possibly help her and Red stop him. "...Tell me what you know about Tom..."

Esther is also a Medium, and places herself into a trance lightly laying her hands upon her wounds. The creole voodoo queen suddenly let’s out an agonizing cry, and her eyes roll back into her head, scaring Elizabeth but she holds still regardless. She moans and rolls her head around in a circle humming with her eyes fluttering. She then straightens her head and closes her eyes. “Beware the man in the red mask...he will be there...the devil man...he will be waiting...for you and your lover...Beware his trap!...”

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"...We all have our own personal Demons we must face, Raymond..." Rauchmann says laying out the remaining four cards along the right side of cards laid out in a pattern resembling a cross.

"...You seem to bring out the worst of them..." Reddington says, becoming increasingly impatient with him, as he begins to worry about leaving Elizabeth alone for so long.

"...You have gone to great lengths to be her protector, Raymond...the love that you both share is a true one...The art of Mesmerism only works when the heart is willing...your Elizabeth was not willing to forget...and neither were you..."

"...Tell me about Tom Keen...” Reddington gets serious still holding his gun at the ready “...You acquired a large amount of Oleander leaves for him...and a recipe for a cake...a king cake...”

"...Yes...I did that...” He confesses; taking the small stone pistol and mortar containing raw and dried exotic herbs, and muddles them together preparing a special gris-gris.

"...I know what happened to the judge’s family...” Reddington begins to confront him with some degree of certainty, "...Is that what you and Tom Keen have planned for the innocent revelers of Mardi Gras, Dieter?...You always wanted to accomplish something grand...so you saw the opportunity to get someone to do your dirty work for you while you just sit here in your cozy little catacomb...you have a gift, a talent, and such a brilliant mind, Dieter...but you are a coward...”

Not rattled by Reddington’s accusations; Rauchmann continues diligently taking a wad of the crushed gris-gris mixture and stuffing it into a small scarlet red drawstring pouch. “...I’m impressed, Red...but I’m afraid that you are only partially correct...” he says calmly. “...I am already retired. My wife was the mastermind of my operations. After Ilsa’s suicide it had lost meaning for me...so I came here and found this beautiful creole princess and decided to make New Orleans my home...”

He tugs firmly on the strings and ties them securely in a knot. “...This operation is all Mr. Keen’s idea. He found out about his wife’s affair by faking his hypnotic trance. I should have detected it...a poor miscalculation on my part...I’m afraid I told him everything to discredit it in his mind...he stormed out furious inflamed with jealousy...I should have contacted you...but he returned with this incredible offer that I could not pass...”

Raymond’s eye begins to twitch as he mentions Tom’s name. He listens intently to Rauchmann’s confession, tucking his gun back into his holster temporarily, as he doesn’t seem to be posing much of a threat at the moment. Raymond cocks his head, giving him his full attention.
Rauchmann continues, “...He came in dead set on wanting Miss Chloe’s recipe for her birthday cake that she used to poison the Judge Bradford’s wife and children, ranting someone needed to be taught a lesson...He then threatened my Esther if I couldn’t produce it...so she wrote out a recipe for her mother’s king cake just to pacify him...it called for four boiled oleander leaves...”

“...Is that enough for it to be fatal?...” Reddington asks.

“...Yes...” he answers “…I offered to sell him the four leaves, but he apparently had developed other plans…” Rauchmann concludes, looking at the final two cards in the spread, holding the small pouch between his fingers. “…Be careful Raymond...this Tom Keen is dangerous and is unhinged...fueled by extreme jealousy and rage...”

Red’s jaw becomes rigid and his twitch in his eye returns. He clinches his fist to try to control his own frustrations.

“...He is preparing a trap for you and your lover to fall...Beware the warehouse on the docks...The outcome is how you play it, Raymond...” he reaches out to hand Reddington the little red pouch. “Here,...take this it will protect you and your lover...take it and good luck and...Godspeed...”

Reddington takes and looks at the innocent looking little pouch, and slips it into his pocket. “ Thank you, Dieter...We’ll be in touch...” Red nods with a little smile, and leaves hastily to find Lizzie and Dembe upstairs.
Chapter 11

Madame Cadeau leaves Elizabeth for a few minutes to attend to a costumer, and make that special ointment she had promised her. Liz takes her small hairbrush out of her purse, and runs it through her hair trying to settle the frizz from the midday humidity, as well as her nerves before Reddington gets back. She sits watching the woman as she chooses about three or four of the tiny apothecary bottles from the tall shelf, taking them behind the counter, and setting them carefully down onto a small hidden table.

The mysterious voodoo queen then sits herself down onto a short stool, and pours a few drops of the contents from each of the little bottles that she had selected into a bowl; chanting some deep incantation while crushing in some dried herbs, Spanish moss, and some brown seaweed into the mix. She muddles and blends them all together with a large stone to concoct a special creamy pasty mixture, and with a spoon transfers the pesto-looking concoction into and empty glass jar. Madame Esther then places adhesive label onto the side of it and with a pen writes the words “La touche de l’amant” (Lover’s Touch) in French on it in bold red ink.

“...Come on, Ray...What the hell is taking so long?...” Elizabeth grumbles, while sitting nervously, and getting increasingly frustrated and worried waiting for Raymond to return, thinking about how irresponsible it had been of him not to have Dembe go with to cover him as he usually does. Liz impatiently slaps the folded newspaper on her thigh; containing herself from wanting to pace the room, but knowing that would probably be a total waste of energy in this humidity, and figuring that it really wouldn’t achieve anything.

The shop is small and quite crowded with all the masks and artifacts hanging around, making walking freely around in there a bit of an awkward challenge. Besides; since Raymond had disappeared into the back room, three customers had come in to browse, and buy some incense from the woman.

All of a sudden; the big black cat reappears at Elizabeth’s feet, sensing she could use some comfort to calm her restlessness. It purrs and raises onto it’s back tiptoes when Liz and Dembe pet it’s back, and puts it’s front paws on her knee wanting Elizabeth to scratch it’s head, making them smile. Just then Liz hears a rustling of the African beaded curtain. She turns around, and smiles with relief to see Red return. “Raymond...finally Where the hell have you been?...I was starting to get worried...What took so long?...”

Reddington hurries towards her at a fast and nervous pace, giving Elizabeth a tight hug, elated just to see her, and the daylight again after that entire ordeal he had had in the dark corridor. Closing his eyes in her comforting embrace, Liz can feel him still shaking like a leaf. He kisses her hair, and looks desperately into her eyes. “We need to go,...Lizzie...” saying with a serious and disconcerting face, which is now having her a bit worried.

“Red, wait...take a look at...” Elizabeth tries to show him the newspaper article but he interrupts her.

“...Later sweetheart,...We need to leave,...Now...” Raymond’s voice, sounding more shaken than rushed; his only interest right now is to get out of there. Liz doesn’t question his reasons, and just folds the paper in half, stuffing it into her purse, with Raymond’s hand in her back to move her along.

“Wait...” Madame Cadeau calls out for them causing them to stop. “...Here,...Take this, Raymond...warm it in your hands and rub this into the skin of your lover’s neck while you are making love to her tonight...Those marks will disappear rather quickly under a true lover’s...
caress...and keep the rest...in case you need it...May the gods protect you both on your journey to extinguish the devil man...Good luck and Godspeed, Elizabeth...you know where to find me...”

“Thank you Madame Esther...for all that you have done...” Liz says nodding graciously, although a bit skeptical of this sorcery, and still a bit uneasy herself; Liz tucks the jar deep into her purse also, giving Raymond a warm but forced smile before they depart with Dembe following close behind.

Raymond and Elizabeth hear the loud deep bellow of a steamboat horn just rolling into port, and unconscious smiles simultaneously appear on each other’s faces. “How about a boat ride on the Mississippi, Lizzie?...I think I hear ‘The Delta Queen’ rolling into port right now...at least there the spirits are friendly, and it's a peaceful, hidden, place to...think...” Red suggests.

Elizabeth can't agree more, "Ok...Ray...That sounds wonderful,...I could use a relaxing long nap..." and gives Red a soft little kiss on the cheek, making him smile even bigger.

Elizabeth lovingly hooks her arm around Raymond’s elbow, and they ascend up the gangplank together amongst the crowd of passengers, feeling much more relaxed to have a little breather before having to confront the imminent danger ahead of them.

Dembe decides to stay behind just to keep an eye on Tom, and find out where he might plan to bake these poisoned king cakes. “I will contact you if I find out anything, Raymond...” he says as he disappears into the busy French Quarter.

Once on board the ship; Red takes a moment to show Elizabeth around. “The Delta Queen is an amazing old vessel of nearly 90 years old...” he explains “...and it’s been fully restored to it’s original state, for taking tourists on short day trips up the Mississippi...It used sail all the way to Memphis, Tennessee and back to the here to the Crescent City”.

*Elizabeth is amazed, and feels a bit nostalgic looking around at the old furnishings, and decor from a bygone era. Raymond places his arm around her shoulder, leading her up their the staircase towards the cabins and studying the framed historical black and white photographs of the Riverboat’s past hanging in the corridor that leads to the private room that Reddington had requested for them.

They come across the last photograph hanging in the hallway, underneath a dimly lit sconce illuminating the image. It is a photograph of her former Captain; Mary Becker Greene standing proudly at the ship’s helm, with a big smile on her face. Liz is fascinated with the picture, making her smile.

Raymond notices how moved she is by the old faded photograph, and places his arm around her shoulder.

“She looks so happy...” she says quietly, almost bringing herself to tears.

“She was...My father was a steward on this boat back in the thirties...he took that photograph...She loved this boat more than anything...some say she never left it...that Captain Greene still walks these halls watching over her ship...”

“I think I’ve had enough experiences with ghosts for one day, Raymond...” Liz says rubbing her brow. “...I have a slight headache. I’d like to just lie down for a while...if that’s ok with you?...”

“Of course sweetheart...” Raymond lightly placed his hand on Elizabeth’s shoulder, and leads her to
the door in the dark corner of the hall. “...Come...in here...”

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Just past sunset, on the magnificent riverboat known as “The Delta Queen”. The sound of cascading water rushing through the slats of the giant red paddlewheel at her stern can be heard from Red and Elizabeth’s cabin.

Raymond sits looking a bit worn down in a green cloth armchair; staring worried into his glass of scotch held loosely in his fingertips, and rubbing his tired eyes with his free hand, and lets it then fall and hang over the armrest. He takes a generous sip of the warm highland spirit, making a face as he feels the burn slowly trickle down his throat, finishing it off with a deep sigh, and glances over at the Queen size bed where Elizabeth is lying fully clothed taking a nap on the bed.

Red gets up from his chair, to slowly walk towards her, he pauses for a second, standing over her, admiring Elizabeth’s delicate beauty while she sleeps. He gently runs his fingers through her hair making it fall away, exposing her neck, revealing the ugly marks. Raymond then remembers the bottle of ointment in her purse that the voodoo queen had given her.

Raymond looks around the room and sees her purse sitting on a chair near the door next to her coat. He walks over and picks up her purse; which is open; and slips his hand inside to feel for the bottle. He finds it quickly and pulls it out. With it the folded newspaper slips out and falls open onto the floor. The sight of Tom’s face looking up at him fills Red a sudden sense of rage, that his eye twitches, and he clinches his fist so tight that he nearly crushes the bottle in his hand.

He quickly gains control of his senses and loosens his grip on the bottle before it breaks, and bends down to pick up the paper off the floor. Red angles the paper to catch the light from the dimmed lamp in the corner, so as not to wake Liz. Briefly reading through the bogus article; Raymond grunts as the wheels in his head begin turn, folding it back up and stuffs it back into her purse.

He walks back over to the bed carrying the bottle in his hand. Raymond undoes the lid of the bottle and takes a quick sniff of the intoxicating aroma that is released. Raymond sets the bottle down on the nightstand, and takes off his vest, and removes his shirt. He gazes down at his “sleeping beauty” and pulls off his white undershirt, expanding his chest in a deep breath, as the scent from the oil begins to fill the room.

Red turns her onto her back and leans down to kiss her just lightly on the lips trying not to wake her, when she reciprocates opening her mouth to invite his tongue to invade her. He accepts her invitation, diving deeper for a bigger bite. The organic scent sends her into a bit of a trance. Reddington then carefully lifts her torso to slip off her blouse and unhook her bra before laying her back down.

“I’m going to take good care of you, my love...” He says in a deep sultry voice falling into a lover’s trance himself. “...I’m going to erase the pain the Tom has inflicted on you...” Raymond takes the bottle and pours a small amount in his hand. Rubbing his hands together to warm it; he places his hands upon the scars around her neck, and slowly massages it in.

Elizabeth instantly feels a burning wave of sexual energy rush through her, and lets off a deep moan. He continues massaging the oil deep into her discolored skin, feeling his erection becoming harder with each subtle sound she makes. “Ohh, Ray...” she utters softly. “...I need you inside of me...”

“Oh Lizzie...” he hesitates at first, because his hands are covered in oil, but then says “...Undo my belt...”
Elizabeth straightens her arm slowly as he moves closer within her reach. She lightly strokes the fabric leg of his trousers, and walks over his growing bulge with her fingernails. Raymond closes his eyes, savoring the subtle sense of her touch, sighing with a content smile of growing anticipation.

He feels a slight tug while she unbuckles his belt, and a gentle draft to the sound of his zipper being undone. “Oh Lizzie...you intoxicate me...” Raymond moans just while she clinches the elastic of his boxers in her fist. Pulling him closer by his boxers Red loses his balance, and falls on top of her. Elizabeth’s eyes light up victoriously as she locks him in a deep engulfing kiss.

She grabs his skull softly with both hands, and wraps her tongue around his in such a deep and desperate embrace. The aphrodisiac-like scent filling the air is having a deep affect on them both. He surrenders and reciprocates her deepening passion. Completely forgetting about the oil on his hands; Raymond slips off his boxers exposing his now painful erection to her tingling covered sex, teasing her through her underwear.

“Ohh Mr. Reddington, yes...Please...Invade me, please...” Liz giggles and moans. Red smiles, and then leans down to kiss the moistening fabric of her soft cotton panties. He dig his nose into the dip of her fleshy mound, teasing her more before taking the thin elastic in his teeth, and taking his time sliding her panties off her long and sensuous legs.

“Ohh...Raymond...” Elizabeth moans as his tongue is gently twirling around her painfully sensitive clit. “...Ohhh...Ray....” she sighs when he slips his tongue inside, vibrating it against her vaginal walls. Red engulfs her sex fully in his mouth, extending his tongue fully, he reaches her G-spot with the tip of his tongue bringing her close to cumming. “Oooh...yes...more...yes Raymond...kiss me, please...kiss me now...”

Red complies with her wish, and retrieves his face from between her legs, and replaces it with his long hard penis, which is now desperate to be inside her again. He enters her slowly and smoothly as he moves over her and locks lips with her with a deep and passionate embrace.

Raymond thrusts her with slow and deliberate strokes driving his manhood deep into his relaxed and welcoming lover. While bathing her face in soft romantic kisses; he is unconsciously still caressing Elizabeth’s neck, chest, breasts with his large warm hands covered in Madame Esther’s fragrant magic oil. She becomes so calm and happy that she falls into a trance.

Red thinks that she has fallen asleep, and considers leaving her rest, so as not to take advantage of her, but he then feels her soft hands squeeze his buttocks so as to not let him go, and forcing him deeper inside her. Liz rolls her head back, making a weak cries as she comes ever so much closer to climaxing.

“Oh Lizzie...I wish I knew what you are thinking right now...I only hope I am there to protect you from him...” he says, thrusting her a little faster, his eyes blazing with lust. Red reaches down to pinch her firm, nipples, making her cry louder, and dig her head deeper into the pillow. Her neck fully exposed to him he begins to notice a change in her skin; the purple reddish marks are dissipating with his erotic touch. “…Lizzie, my love...It’s working...”

“Oh Red...Red...” Liz gasps; fallen into an apparent trance again; she mutters some strange words that are quite disturbing. “…Raymond, be careful...Please...No, he’s over there...Raymond...Behind you...the hook...Look Out!!!...Raymond!!!!...” Her voice becomes more fearful and more frantic; Liz’s body tenses up.”…Tom...” She gasps to Reds surprise. He struggles to hold back the hurt and rage he suddenly feels inside.

“...No...Tom...Stop...Leave him alone...Tom, please don’t...Tom...” Elizabeth begs, crying and lost in a nightmarish trance.
“Lizzie?...” Red asks; pained by the fear and terror in her voice. He kisses her breasts to try and calm her. She thrashes her head around nearing an explosive orgasm. She contracts her pelvic muscles so tightly around his throbbing cock, driving him over the edge causing Raymond to let off a deep orgasmic howl. “...Oooooohhh...my god, Lizzie...You are my Delta Queen....” He groans as he comes hard, and with a vengeance. “...Lizzie...don’t stop...Oh Lizzie...Lizzie....wake up...” he gasps, out of breath, and collapsing on top of her with exhaustion.

“Ray...” Elizabeth cries faintly, and breathless. Her eyes move rapidly until they fix onto the eyes of her lover. “...Ohh Ray...That was insane...What happened?...”

“Insanely good, my dear” Reddington says with a smirk feeling oddly proud of himself.

“Yes....I mean no...I mean...I saw him...” she stammers still frightened.

“Tom?...” Red asks with a twinge of jealousy, feeling a bit hurt to hear her call her husband’s name during their moment of such glorious sexual bliss. Liz averts her eyes, ashamed and confused. He frowns and turns away, wondering if she would ever fully allow herself to be free of his abusive grasp.

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Red stands up to find his trousers. Raymond picks his pants up off the floor. He sighs sadly knowing he knows Liz better but that, but can’t help but worry if she may still be having feelings for that monster. He returns to sit on the bed beside her to put them on. There is an awkward silence as Elizabeth realizes what may be going on in his mind. She looks at him with tears in her eyes, placing her hand on his arm, interrupting his motions and turning to look at her.

“Red...I had another one of those visions...” she tells him hesitantly.

“I know...” he says rather gruffly.

“...Red...This one really scared me...It wasn’t a memory...It felt like a premonition...a warning...” she says, her voice shaking. Her eyes as wide and innocent as the night he pulled her from the fire all those years ago.

Raymond takes a slow deep breath, giving her full attention, asking calmly in a deep raspy voice. “...Tell me everything Lizzie...every detail...start at the beginning...”

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