

THESE VIOLENT DELIGHTS

Written by

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INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

In the dim light of a seedy dive bar, the CACKLES and SHOUTS of inebriated MEN and their nightly ESCORTS create a music unique to a socialization hub for the lower middle class.

SUPER: "NOUVEAUX, 2668"

Various MEN and WOMEN, dressed for blue-collar jobs, sit scattered around the cacophonous room.

Some watch a sporting match, featuring two teams of robots kicking a ball back and forth, on floor-to-ceiling screens. Occasionally, some of them CHEER with excitement as others CURSE and throw their hands in the air.

PROSTITUTES line the walls of the room, male and female, naturally beautiful and made up to accentuate their already well-displayed features. A constant stream of them flows in and out of the doors to a back, unseen section of the tavern.

Androids mill about behind the bar, delivering and making drink after drink for the paying human customers.

A few lone wolves sit at the counter, each playing absently with the dinky touchscreens built into the bar itself.

All except one.

At the end of the bar, face largely hidden by a raised black hood, Lilac REDEN (19) sits on a stool, her nervous fingers tapping against her otherwise untouched mug of ale.

A loud SHOUT from the gaming crowd causes Reden to jump and glance over her shoulder. After a moment, she relaxes as she turns back towards the bar and takes a deep breath.

HENRI (O.S.)

Lilac?

Reden gasps and turns around once more to find HENRI (mid 40s) standing behind her, a half-empty glass in his hand. With features that have aged none too kindly over the years, Henri regards her as one might regard a startled animal.

HENRI (CONT'D)

Hey, kid. It's just me.

Reden looks around at the other patrons in the busy bar, though none so much as raise their heads at the interaction.

HENRI (CONT'D)

Are you all right?

Reden turns back to the man and nods. Henri downs the remnants of his glass and sets it down on the counter. With a smile, he extends his hand to Reden.

HENRI (CONT'D)

Come on. Let's go somewhere quieter. And more private.

Reden nods again and takes Henri's hand. She allows him to lead her to the back of the room and through the doorway through which several courtesans and their customers have already disappeared.

INT. PLEASURE ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Reden enters a small room, sparsely decorated with a chaise and a couple of armchairs. Before Henri steps in after her and pulls the door to, sounds of pleasure can be heard from all around. After the door shuts, silence envelops them.

Reden lowers her hood, revealing long hair, tightly braided back from a face that might be considered conventionally beautiful, were it not for the thin scar marring the skin from her ear to the corner of her mouth on one side.

Henri's eyes fall to the scar with an expression of pity before he looks back up to meet Reden's eyes.

The two stand at a short distance from each other for a moment before Henri opens his arms to her.

Reden smiles at the man and hugs him warmly, the familiar embrace of a father and daughter, or an uncle and niece.

REDEN

It's been a long time, Henri.

HENRI

I can't believe you're here.

He pulls away just enough to look at her, never removing his arms from her shoulders.

HENRI (CONT'D)

I was so surprised to hear from you. After eight years, most of us assumed the worst.

Reden shrugs and Henri rubs her arm comfortingly. He moves to sit in one of the armchairs, leading Reden in the same direction. She pulls her arm away gently.

REDEN

I think I'd rather remain standing.

HENRI

Of course. I understand.

Henri sits in one of the armchairs, watching Reden's every move as she meanders about the room and examines the dime-a-dozen minimalist artwork hanging on the red walls.

HENRI (CONT'D)

Where have you been, Lilac?

REDEN

Here and there. You'll have to forgive me if I don't tell you exactly.

HENRI

I understand. I suppose trust isn't easy to come by when you're a Reden. Or even a friend of theirs.

She pulls her cloak tighter around her, moving on to the next painting and avoiding his gaze.

HENRI (CONT'D)

I can't imagine what it's been like for you. And the things people must say about your father.

Reden shrugs.

REDEN

You get used to it.

Henri's face falls, expression heavy with guilt and an overwhelming sadness. He leans forward in his chair.

HENRI

I'm glad you reached out to me.

REDEN

You were one of my father's closest friends and allies.

HENRI

I trusted him with my life.

Henri pitches his voice into a whisper before he continues.

HENRI (CONT'D)

There are a great many more of us,
Lilac, that believed what your
father believed.

Reden meets his gaze over her shoulder.

HENRI (CONT'D)

And, if you'll allow us, we want to
help you make his ideas a reality.

Reden pauses and turns back to the painting before her.

REDEN

You would defy the king, even now?
After all that's been lost?

Henri straightens in his chair.

HENRI

I would kill the king myself.

Face blank and untelling, Reden nods.

REDEN

I see.

Henri stands, leaving the space between them uncrossed.
Reden reaches one hand up and grasps the stone on the small,
unassuming pendant around her neck.

HENRI

I know you're afraid. But don't be.
You're safe with us.

Henri coughs and clears his throat.

HENRI (CONT'D)

Sorry.

(beat)

We can defeat him, Lilac. The King
is not --

Another, more violent cough wracks Henri's body, halting his
words. A wicked smile flashes across Reden's face, there and
gone in an instant. She turns back to her father's friend,
her expression fixed in a deadpan once again.

REDEN

The king is not what? The rightful
ruler? All-powerful? How about
this, Henri.

Reden steps over to him, like a mountain cat stalking its prey. Henri's eyes shoot to Reden in terror and realization.

REDEN (CONT'D)

The King of France is not to be underestimated.

Through the rasping COUGHS and GAGGING, Henri gasps out a response, clutching onto her cloak for support.

HENRI

Lilac, please.

Reden takes a step back, yanking the fabric from Henri's hand. The man stumbles and loses his footing briefly, leaning instead on the armchair to keep himself upright.

REDEN

Lilac Reden is dead. And soon, so shall you be.

Henri claws at his throat as he coughs again and blood spatters out onto his lip.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Henri Saint Germain, on the count of conspiracy to commit an act of high treason against the crown of France, as your jury, I find you guilty.

Henri falls to his knees, gasping for air past the blood now pouring from his mouth and nose.

REDEN (CONT'D)

As your judge, I sentence you to death. And as your executioner --

Reden watches as Henri collapses, writhing as he chokes to death on his own blood. She spots something and reaches over to unbutton his shirt. She pulls it back to reveal a tattoo of two wyverns on the background of a fleur de lis.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Huh.

Reden reaches behind her ear and taps the skin there, eyes narrowing at the tattoo.

Reden blinks and lowers her hand. She carefully rebuttons Henri's shirt, quick and nimble despite his constant flopping about with the coughs racking his body.

REDEN (CONT'D)

As your executioner, I carry out
this sentence.

She kneels beside him, lightly touching his face to draw his
gaze up to hers.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Long live the king.

Henri's movements stop entirely. His hands fall limp to the
ground and his head tilts backward, eyes now glassy and
lifeless.

Reden raises her hood, stalking across the room and opening
the door.

Where the lively SHOUTS and MOANS of the other patrons once
filled the air, now quiet spurts of COUGHING, GAGGING, and
SOBBING penetrate the otherworldly silence surrounding the
bodies in the hall outside.

CYNFAEL (V.O.)

Do you believe it was necessary to
kill all of them?

INT. THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Reden stands at the foot of a large dais at the center of a
cavernous room. Sitting in the grand black, red, and gold
throne on the dais, CYNFAEL (late 40s), the handsome, though
aging and brutish King of France, scowls at Reden.

SUPER: "MALAIS PALACE"

Reden's face holds its customary impassive mask as she
regards the king, neither afraid nor proud.

REDEN

Yes, sir. The man you sent me to
investigate was one of the southern
rebels. I noticed a few more men on
your wanted list in the
establishment. Everyone else was
either equally involved or aiding
known traitors. It was a mercy they
all died as easily as they did.

The king folds his hands together and rests his elbows on the
arms of the massive throne.

CYNFAEL

I see. And how was that, exactly?

REDEN

Radiation poisoning. I knew Henri wouldn't drink from just any tap unless he saw others doing the same. So I spiked the lot.

Reden reaches into her cloak and retrieves a vial about the size and length of her index finger, seemingly empty.

REDEN (CONT'D)

Tiny little devices, the size of a grain of salt. Completely harmless unless activated with alcohol and --

She lays a hand on her pendant, pressing a hidden button on the back which causes the necklace to emit a barely susceptible sonic frequency.

REDEN (CONT'D)

A micro-sonic emitter.

The king nods.

CYNFAEL

I wasn't aware your little experiment had been tested yet.

REDEN

This was the test.

CYNFAEL

I see. And if it had gone wrong?

REDEN

I'd have followed Henri out of the tavern and slit his throat.

Cynfael nods, content with the answer.

CYNFAEL

And what of the androids?

REDEN

Didn't see my face or hear my voice to run through any government recognition.

The king nods again.

CYNFAEL

You mentioned a symbol on Henri Dubois's chest. May I see?

Reden throws back the cloak on her right arm. On the bare skin there glows a panel similar to a phone touch screen. Reden taps a few buttons, then reaches behind her ear to touch the same spot from before.

She flicks her wrist toward the wall and a nearly invisible screen hanging there suddenly lights up with an image. Henri Dubois from Reden's point of view. Cynfael examines the photograph critically as Reden zooms in on the tattoo.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Interesting.

REDEN

I've seen the fleur de lis before. The southern border rebels like to use it for their brands. But the other things. Snakes?

CYNFAEL

Wyverns. Ancient protectors of royal bloodlines.

He gestures to the image.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

This is the seal of a royal family that never was.

Reden glances from the image to the king.

REDEN

Do you mean to say they created this for my father?

Cynfael's eyes narrow at the design on the screen.

CYNFAEL

Perhaps.

Reden retracts the image by tapping her arm a few more times.

REDEN

I'll look into this. See what I can find.

CYNFAEL

That won't be necessary.

Reden pauses for a moment, confusion crossing her usually schooled features.

REDEN

Majesty. With all respect, if we can find that symbol anywhere else in the mortuaries or in the rebel camps, we might find leads as to where their base is.

CYNFAEL

And so our people will look. However, that is not the path that lies before you, Lethe.

The King stands from his throne and walks a few steps down the bottom of the dais, coming face to face with Reden.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

You've been paying your father's debts for a long while now.

Reden drops her gaze from the king's, frowning.

REDEN

There is much to pay.

CYNFAEL

Yes, there was. However, after seeing how well you've done since your appointment to the River Lords's council, I think that, perhaps...

He trails off, reaching under Reden's chin to lift her eyes back up to meet his own.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

Perhaps it is time relieve you of the burden you carry.

REDEN

Majesty, I do not understand.

CYNFAEL

You are a lady of a council of my closest security advisors. You have proven yourself time again not only as my best assassin, but as one of my most loyal subjects. And you should be rewarded as such.

REDEN

Sir. Forgive me. I think I've misunderstood.

CYNFAEL

Freedom, Lethe. Freedom from your father's legacy.

REDEN

Freedom? I could leave?

CYNFAEL

Perhaps I wouldn't want you to leave the palace for good. But I am certainly willing to give you a little leash. So long as you don't plan on strangling me with it.

Reden stands straighter, prouder.

REDEN

I would never. You are my king. I would die to protect you. I could never lift a hand against you. Not after all you've given me.

CYNFAEL

Good. You're almost done, Lethe.

The king strokes her hair before returning to his throne and turning back to his subject.

CYNFAEL (CONT'D)

One more mission, mundane as any other. But then, your crowning glory. A legacy to call your own.

REDEN

I shall do whatever you will, your majesty.

Cynfael smiles again, the wicked gleam in his eyes burning like an ember in a dying fire.

INT. PALACE TRAINING ROOM - NIGHT

Reden wanders through the training room doors lost in thought and not paying attention to the world around her.

HUGO (O.S.)

Oi! There she is!

Reden glances up, her reverie broken. Fighting in the training room are three men, each wielding solid wooden staffs. All three look up and halt their training session when Reden enters.