

### Ruby 3

#### Chapter 21 - Hydrology

**“It felt as though it didn’t matter who you were, how rich you were, or how you lived. Good sex was like life suddenly giving you a Nebuchadnezzar of vintage champagne.”**

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~ Then ~

~ North Korea – The East Sea Naval Base ~

Baba Yaga was a good twenty five miles away from the East Sea Naval Base. She was hovering, over a thousand feet above the ocean, using her gifts to tap the energy at the edge of space. She was building a ring of energy, just as Trudy had done in China. Baba Yaga was older though, she knew a few tricks that Trudy had yet to learn.

“Now you will pay for Patrick’s death.” She muttered. “You will suffer.”

Modern technology works perfectly on nice dry sunny days. It doesn’t do so well in rain and storms and may not work at all during electrical storms. Some of the best high tech weaponry ever designed, simply refuses to work at all during extreme weather conditions. Baba Yaga was busy creating just those conditions.

While her vortex of energy continued to build, high up above her, she pulled in the energy in the lower atmosphere. Ultimately less impressive than a megaton blast, the effects were quicker, more immediate, shock and awe on the quick. Clouds first, as the weather front appeared out of a nice fine day. She was too eager, too keen to begin.

“Patience you old fool.” She chided herself. “Let it build !”

More energy, dragged in from the surrounding area, pulling down the temperature, adding strength to the storm front. Dark dangerous looking clouds now, hanging over the naval base, just about visible on her horizon. Baba Yaga was good at a lot of things, but not patience. Oh no, she sucked at that. She forced herself to close her eyes and wait for a good long five minutes, while the forces of nature caught up with her designs.

“Good, good.”

Her tropical storm was hitting the base. So far it would probably just about be strong enough to gain a name, if it was in the Caribbean. Tropical storm Baba Yaga. Enough wind to keep all but the keenest pilots on the ground, with enough lightning to give their guidance systems a hard time. It was building though, soon everything would be kept on the ground, apart from her of course. Next the sea was going to become her weapon. Baba Yaga raised herself to fifteen hundred feet. She had no intention of creating a wave anywhere near that high, but those kinds of forces were difficult to control. Plus she hadn’t created such weapons very often and last time the wave had travelled miles inland.

“It must be kept well clear of Ruby.”

The sea was the same as the air high up in the atmosphere; the tiny particles were the generators. Tiny particles rubbing against other tiny particles, as they rose up on warm currents. Multiply all that rubbing by hundreds of billions of particles and you had almost limitless amounts of energy.

Mankind might never learn how to harness that power, but Baba Yaga knew how.

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~ Now ~

Ruby had been surprised how much equipment they'd needed to bring in via the small airfield in Tororo. It had made the local population more curious about them, but also more friendly. Anyone bringing money and potential jobs into the area was seen as good news. A few items had arrived for Rory and he'd let her borrow one of them.

"I didn't think the geology of this part of Uganda had been investigated so well." She said.

"Some geology Ruby, but the important thing for you is the local hydrology.....Where the underground water will be a hazard to mining."

The scientist on the other end of the satellite link was a UK government adviser, a sir no less, though he kept insisting that she called him Kenneth. He'd been told to help her by Foxy. After a few conversations she was beginning to get the idea that Kenneth viewed helping her as his chance for a little excitement in an otherwise quiet life.

"I have the charts Kenneth, they arrived yesterday." She said. "You're sure the water under my feet is a significant amount?"

"Half a mile below your feet, but yes.....There's a lot of water. More than enough to make deep mining an impossibility. There are numerous wells and boreholes in that area and all of them take from that underground water supply. I doubt it Tororo would exist without a ready supply of clean water. The good thing is that you're right at the edge of it. Move your mining operations two miles to the east.....Three miles to be safe and you can dig down two miles."

"There will be no water there Sir.....Sorry, Kenneth?"

"Water is the constant nemesis of all who dig into the ground. Dig anywhere and you will end up with wet boots at some point. But dig where I said and you will miss the significant area of underground water."

She had charts provided by Foxy and the British army via Rory. They'd also provided her with underground charts with Chinese and Russian notes on the edges. Every chart confirmed what Kenneth had told her.

"Why have so many geol.....Hydrologists, looked at this area?" She asked.

"Britain did some work on the natural resources of Uganda and so did the Americans, but that was some time ago. The Russians and Chinese used whole teams looking at wells and lakes, there was even seismology involved. The Chinese especially did a huge amount of work. They see Africa as a vast source of natural resources waiting to be dug out of the ground."

"I see.....Just roughly. How much water are we talking about? If I dig straight down, how big a lake am I likely to hit?"

"Well erm..... British intelligence did acquire a lot of data from a source in China. I could send you the forecast water yield calculations in billions of dekalitres...Is that what you want?"

"Just a rough idea..... How many Olympic sized swimming pools of the wet stuff?"

"Hmmm..... Very roughly and don't quote me, but about..... One and a half Lake Windermers."

"Crap !.....Sorry Kenneth that is more than I thought."

"You wouldn't release all that of course.....We're still discovering things about the way the Earth's crust stores water. It isn't one vast lake down there. Again don't quote me but.....I think if you dug down half a mile....You'd release about a twentieth of that stored water."

"A twentieth of Lake Windermere."

"One and a half Windermers Ruby."

"Still.....I think that will be just about right.....Perfect."

"Perfect ! You can't dig through that much water, or keep it out of the mine workings."

“No, I understand that. I can arrange for someone called Kallina to be in London later today. Could you give her your detailed calculations please ?”

“Yes of course, always glad to help.”

“Thank you....I may call you again.”

Ruby had the start of an idea that was so far out of the box, that it would probably have scared the crap out of Sir Kenneth. He'd have definitely informed someone in UK intelligence about her dangerous and potentially apocalyptic plan. The last thing she needs was Rory telling her not to dig holes in Uganda. The more she thought about it, the more certain she was that secrecy was essential.

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George Polandrous ached a little as he climbed out of bed, but it was a good ache. Muscles not used in a while were complaining, but only in a mild way. As he walked towards the bathroom to pee, he looked back at Malou, as she slept peacefully, wrapped up in a cocoon of blankets. For a moment it was twenty years ago, when neither of them had a single grey hair, or anything that ached first thing in the morning. He shut the bathroom door and looked in the mirror above the sink.

“Are we both crazy ?” He muttered.

The sex had been different to the last time they'd shared a bed, though it was still damn good. More cuddles and less frantic....He looked in the mirror and grinned at himself. They'd both ended up hot and sweaty. George had a memory in his head from about three in the morning. Sweat had been dripping off his hair onto Malou's cheek. It felt as though it didn't matter who you were, how rich you were, or how you lived. Good sex was like life suddenly giving you a Nebuchadnezzar of vintage champagne.

“If we are both mad, I'm happy with being crazy.”

After peeing he decided to leave Malou sleeping, while he took a shower. His robe would be hanging in the closet though, the place the room cleaners always put it. Thinking about cleaners made him panic slightly, they were all Malou's staff after all. Who the boss was sleeping with was none of their concern. Still naked he found the 'Do not disturb,' sign and carefully opened the door enough to hang it on the handle outside. Door locked and Malou's reputation protected, he found his robe and headed back towards the bathroom.

“We could share the shower.....We always used to.”

Malou walking towards him, using a bed sheet wrapped round her as a robe. There was that weird thing with his memory again. For just a moment they were both a lot younger. They had just spent an entire weekend virtually naked, surviving on the contents of the minibar. He hugged her and the sheet fell away.

“Why did we leave this so long ?” He muttered.

“No looking back George, no wondering why.....about anything. Come back to bed, we can shower later.”

“I put the do not disturb sign on the door.”

“Good.”

If it was brain fog, he was enjoying it. George let his robe fall to the ground and followed Malou back to the bed. In his mind they were both thirty something again, early forties at the most. It was that long weekend, when they were both sore from so much sex. She'd dragged him back to the bed then, and they'd soon forgotten about being tired or sore. Somewhere inside him the real George, the older George, did feel tired. The erection between his legs though and the way Malou made him feel....Those were real too.

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"I must date more army guys." Said Ruby. "You have some really great gadgets."

"Oi, behave yourself." Said Todd.

Not just the satellite phone, she'd also borrowed a surveying device which gave her position with far more accuracy than her phone. Her tent had a few more gadgets on long term loan from the British armed forces, even if they didn't realise the loan was going to be long term. A couple of heavy weapons too, just in case her plan to take care of the Nagala wasn't a complete success.

".....to kill three hundred of these creatures Ruby.....It can be done.....We'd need to incinerate many square miles of Uganda though, including Tororo....."

Kallina had told her, only a few hours before. Ruby's plan had to work, the alternative was unthinkable. Not that she expected to kill all the Nagala. Fire could be used to kill the few surviving Nagala and the heavy weapons brought in by helicopter by Rory.

".....No living thing can survive intense heat and fire...."

Kallina had said and Ruby hadn't wanted to contradict her. Hadn't they discovered basic signs of life on Venus though, where it was as hot as the inside of an oven ? There were the heavy weapons to fall back on, one could take out a tank with a single shot. Ruby pushed doubt onto the back burner and moved slightly to her left. The surveying device was showing the same coordinates as the Chinese charts.

"Here.... This is the spot." She said. "Who had the flags ? Sophie... Come and stick a flag in the ground, right where my right big toe is resting."

"Red flag or white ?" Asked Sophie.

"Doesn't matter..... There are a few trees a bit too close."

"I can get those cut down." Said Todd.

"The kids will need keeping back too, they're following us everywhere." Said Sophie.

"I'll talk to them later.....They're just curious."

No one cared about the ever present children from the nearby settlement. The kids went everywhere and saw everything and everyone was too busy to care that much about it. They'd needed a drone, so Sophie had hovered at about fifteen hundred feet with an HD camera. None of the wunderkinds were being cautious and the rogues were far worse. Ruby dreaded to think what the curious kids had seen. But, as Sophie had so accurately pointed out.

"Anyway.....No one listens to kids."

Ruby was beginning to avoid too much contact with the people of the settlement, just in case she was left with only one way of destroying the Nagala. She pointed her toe at a spot and Sophie jammed a metal rod into the soil. On top of the rod was a bright red flag.

"There, we need to start digging at that exact spot." Said Ruby. "A tunnel at a gradient of twenty six and a half degrees. Steep, but we'll just about be able to keep our feet."

"I might send the Chinese a thank you for the charts." Said Sophie.

"Crap..... Is she serious ?" Asked Todd.

Sophie just gave him one of her most withering looks.

"Not all his fault Sophie.....You do have a weird sense of humour." Said Ruby. "I get confused by it sometimes."

Ruby found herself the target of a withering look and decided to say no more on the subject.

"Are you creating this tunnel first ?" Asked Todd.

"No, the tunnel straight down at the main camp will be first." Said Ruby. "No one will be using that tunnel, so it can be dug really quickly. Quick and dirty, until we hit the water."

Ruby hoped Todd didn't drift into the whole how much water business. Even to her, one and a half Lake Windermere's still sounded terrifying, even if she was only going to use a relatively small amount of it. Just a few million dekalitres....What could go wrong ?

"Someone is coming." Said Sophie.

Ruby had spotted who it was when they were still a mile away and she was sure Sophie had too. Todd was the only one of them who had no idea who was walking through the bushes, heading towards them.

"She's on her own." Said Ruby.

"Who is it ?" Asked Todd.

"Charlotte."

Ruby didn't resent Sophie running towards Charlotte, or the way she hugged her. It was difficult for Ruby though, so much had happened, so much had been said. She felt like the mother who wanted her daughter to become independent and do well, only to see her mixing with the wrong crowd. Doing favours for the British government was one thing, while working for the cartel was something else entirely. Ruby waited for Charlie to approach her.

"I said I'd come back when you needed me." Said Charlie.

Enough reserve and holding back. Ruby hugged Charlie for quite some time, while Sophie led Todd away to give them a little privacy.

"I heard about your trouble in Mexico. Did you get any new scars ?" Asked Ruby.

"Oh, of course I did. Everyone else heals up perfectly, but me.....No. I have scars from Vladivostok, scars from North Korea. I even have scars from training with.....Look, look...New scars."

Nice of her not to mention Serge, though hearing his name no longer set off any negative emotions, or at least none she couldn't handle. Charlie had her top pulled to one side to show her several nasty looking scars across her tummy.

"This is where the bullet came out, but the entry wound left more scars....Crazy."

"You did die and come back again Charlie, so don't complain too much."

It was Charlie's turn to move forward and hold her in a prolonged hug.

"I'm so sorry Ruby....The way I was....."

"It's alright, I understand....You needed to be your own person."

"That was part of it, but some things were lost when I came back. The anger I felt all the time, the dark moods. All that has gone and I hope they never come back. Though I do worry about what else I might have lost. Kallina was telling me about the Arbiters. Maybe they have a few answers for me ?"

"I'm sure they will, millions of them. They're the Arbiters of what they think of as the One True Faith. I can guarantee they'll have answers to everything and anything, all of it nonsense."

"You're probably right, though it can't hurt to ask."

"No it can't.....I'm starving, we should get back to the camp." Said Ruby.

Sophie and Todd followed them, as they began the two mile trudge back to camp. Ruby could have used a vehicle, but she quite enjoyed walking through across that part of Uganda, if it was a good day.

"There seems to be a lot of children following us." Said Charlie.

"Our eyes and ears.....We'll know if a strange dog walks into Tororo."

"Useful."

"Very."

Charlie had something to say, Ruby could almost see the emotional waves coming off her.

"I'm going to get a place in Paris." Said Charlie. "Nothing huge, just a small apartment. Something like your place in Hackney."

"But hopefully without the funky smell on the stairs."

"I actually quite like that smell now."

Paris wasn't that far from London. Paris was where Malou was, it seemed Charlie had chosen a new mentor. Not that Ruby felt anger or more than a small smidgen of annoyance. Malou would make a great teacher, almost a surrogate grandmother. Didn't all kids love their grandmother? There came a point where Sophie had obviously felt they'd been given enough privacy.

"Did you hear about Max killing Lionel?"

"Yes....Kallina got me caught up on gossip.....How could Monique have sex with Max? He's so putrid."

"He has a way about him." Said Ruby. "Monique isn't the first to fall under his spell."

"Ewww." Said Charlie and Sophie, almost simultaneously.

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Eugenie had noticed the new spring George had in his step, the moment he'd arrived at the airport to meet her. Once she talked to Malou her suspicions were confirmed. It didn't take any super powers or delving into their minds to know that George and Malou were now lovers. They constantly touched, any excuse to link fingers, like two hormone filled teenagers. All the staff realised of course, even if the hotel's new Romeo and Juliet weren't talking about it openly.

"I feel really guilty about this." Malou had said to her. "Are you sure you won't get too bored?"

"No, I have lots of things to read and I really enjoy people watching."

"There will always be someone ready to help with the baby. Just wave at whoever is on reception duty."

"Oh, I will."

That had been a few hours before and besides asking Virna on reception to watch Seong while she went to the bathroom. Eugenie hadn't moved from her spot near the front windows of the hotel. She was comfortable and there seemed to be a never ending supply of coffee and nibbles arriving on her table. Her phone was on silent and she didn't recognise the strange code where someone's name usually appeared. Curiosity got the better of her natural caution.

"Hello, who is this?"

"It's Nari.... How is my little monster?"

"Nari...I didn't think your phones worked where you are. Seong is fine and being spoiled by everyone. We're in Paris now, at Malou's hotel."

Seong was happy and every member of the hotel's staff had wanted to come and play with her. Yet Eugenie still felt guilty at taking Nari's child away from London.

"Ruby has borrowed a satellite phone. I've heard of the hotel in Paris. Sarah once told me how comfortable and beautiful it is. I hope to meet Malou one day."

"It is really nice.....I hope you don't mind me bringing Seong here? She's not being neglected I promise you. Malou has two nannies arriving to be interviewed this afternoon."

"Of course I know you'll look after her. I wouldn't have left Seong with you if I hadn't trusted you."

"I'd put the phone next to her, but there's nothing to hear. She's fast asleep.....Can the phone you're using receive pictures?"

"Not sure, I'll ask."

Eugenie could hear Nari muttering at someone, a man by the sound of the voice. Quite quickly Nari was back with an answer.

“Yes it can.”

Eugenie tried a few times, until the perfect picture of the sleeping child was on her phone. She pressed send and was quite surprised at how quickly it reached Nari in Uganda. There was a squeal of joy down the phone.

“Oh.... Thank you, I’m sure she’s grown a little.” Said Nari.

“She definitely feels heavier when I pick her up.....Would you like a piece of really juicy gossip. A real jaw dropper to get everyone there excited ?”

“Yes of course I do, who wouldn’t ?”

“Tell Ruby first and watch her reaction. Tell her George and Malou are sharing a bed.”

“Wow, yes.....I’ll let her know.”

More general small talk before someone muttered at Nari and she had to go. Eugenie felt relaxed for the first time since arriving in Paris. Nari knew where Seong was and wasn’t angry about it.

“Do you need anything ?” Asked Virna.

“Any more coffee and I won’t sleep for a month. Tea would be nice and a sandwich, anything will do.”

Eugenie went back to watching the street, a camera on the seat next to her in case anyone of interest walked by. She had a notebook to enter details about those carrying out surveillance on the hotel, but so far it was blank. The empty page wasn’t a sign that she’d been distracted by other things. Mentally watching the street required a very shallow skimming of minds. Anyone with an obsessive interest in the hotel would ping in her mind like a fire alarm. Tea arrived and a plate with at least six rounds of assorted sandwiches.

“Thank you Virna.”

Seong was due a feed, but Eugenie had learned not to wake her up if she was sleeping peacefully. She thought that not waking sleeping babies should be up there in the top five of universal life hacks. Eugenie began to fill the blank page with a drawing of a man who’d stopped outside on a bicycle. Young, probably no more than twenty, he was sending her mental alarm crazy.

“So Malou, you’re not paranoid after all.” She muttered.

He was looking for a face, actually two faces, both with no names attached. The young cyclist looked from one side of the hotel frontage to the other, comparing faces to a picture attached to the handlebars of his tatty looking bike. As he looked at the two men he was looking for, Eugenie saw them too. Christophe and Jai, though only the Gods stood a chance of ever finding poor Christophe.

“Just look slightly more towards me.....”

He did and she quickly took three pictures, trusting the clever and expensive camera to correct her lack of expertise. He didn’t feel like police, the man she now thought of as Tatty Bike. The police never hired outsiders to do surveillance work, but the security services did. They did it all the time.

“Virna....Can you.... ?”

Eugenie pointed at Seong, as she stepped through the hotel’s doors and into the street. Looking into minds was always a bit hit and miss, unless you could talk to the person and give them a verbal trigger. The number of other people about was also a factor, and there were quite a few walking past the hotel. It was like trying to home in on one voice, in a room where everyone was shouting. Eugenie deliberately bumped into Tatty Bike. After all, he had stopped half on the pavement, right in front of the hotel.

“Désolé, je suis si maladroit.” ‘Sorry, I’m so clumsy.’ Said Eugenie.

She didn't want to mention the Ostby's by name and there hadn't been time to think of a safe trigger word. Contact was good though, good old fashioned skin against skin. She put her hand on his and apologised again.

Tatty Bike didn't reply and she felt fear in his mind, fear of whoever had sent him. Not the police, but someone Tatty Bike thought of as the authorities. It seemed Malou had been right all along, the French security services were watching the hotel and they had pictures of the cartel men. As the young man sped off on his bike, she picked up an image of whoever had scared him. Eugenie wasn't a brilliant artist, but she hoped to draw a likeness Malou might recognise.

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Ruby stood, looking at the ground. Everything took time and nothing was ever a quick two minute job. She thought her attempt to hide her frustration was working, until Sarah let out a gasp.

"She knows what she's doing Sarah." Said Spider.

"But..... Her fingers."

Ruby Mason hadn't even felt it, there was no pain. Like tiny miniature lightning, electricity was running up and down the gaps between her fingers. It sparked, actually making audible sounds and giving off a slight smell which was impossible to describe, but which reminded her of fairground rides as a child.

"Where the hell is Anna ?" She barked.

No one answered her, none of them wanted to be involved with anyone or anything she might be feeling upset about. Ruby played with the electricity in her hands, allowing some of it to crackle, as it hit the ground at her feet. Kallina was at the far side of what would soon become a tunnel dug into the ground. To her right was Charlotte. To her left was where it was hoped Ishel would stand. The leader of the rogues claimed not to understand the forces about to be used. Nonsense of course and they all knew it, though Ishel was still sticking to the claim.

"Ready ?" She asked.

Both of them were ready, everyone was ready, apart it seemed, for Anna.

"You've all decided to stay, but keep well back." Shouted Ruby.

It seemed a pointless warning, nothing was actually happening. But like all the talking and pointing and yet more talking during airline safety announcements. Sometimes things did go wrong and people did get killed.

"If you're at all worried.....Go to where the vehicles have been parked." She yelled.

Not that anywhere within five hundred miles was likely to be safe, if the worst happened. The great rift had pulled at the Earth's crust. It had cracked, pushed, pulled and irrevocably changed much of the African landscape. Doc had described the problem better than any geological report.

"You've seen the rift Ruby, you've walked beside it for miles. The Earth has been stressed, wound up like a piece of elastic. If you're not careful.....I'm just saying the elastic might decide to snap back."

"He's right.....The amount of energy you want to use." Kallina had added. "I doubt if we're really in any danger of splitting African in two. But there is a very real chance the rift might open along its entire length. A trench of fire that long, right through the heart of Africa, it's....."

"Unthinkable.....It'll be an ecological disaster." Charlotte had said.

It might well be, if the worst happened and that was a very real possibility. A disaster was preferable to an apocalypse though. Ruby knew the events shown to her in the ancient device were going to become a reality, unless they could enter the last hidden world of the Das Geheimnis. The red colouration in a sky full of hot poisonous gases, a once green Earth rendered lifeless.

"If only we knew the true nature of the threat." Ruby had said.



“We don’t, but I believe it to be real. I feel it....I know it to be real.” Kallina had told them.

“Perhaps....Now we’re talking about it.” Sophie had said. “Maybe our ancestors created the great rift. All the power needed to create what they call the shroud to keep them hidden. That might have caused the pulling and tugging at the ground, for countless millennia.”

“Maybe, but that’s for scholars to argue about once the real problem has been dealt with by people like us.” Ishel had added. “We know what you saw in the device is very real Ruby, all my people know it. Unless we get past the shroud, those views you were given of a grim future, will become reality. It is why we used the term Ragnarök to describe what threatens us all.”

So they had to risk a disaster in the hope of averting an apocalypse. There were times when Ruby really wished she’d thrown that damned ancient device away. If anyone but Kurt had given it to her. He’d risked so much to get it to her though, people had even died, good people. She noticed Anna running towards her.

“Sorry Ruby, those fucking kids.....I had to threaten the older ones. They are now all at a safe distance.”

“You’re certain?”

“Yes I am.”

“Good, thank you.”

Ruby reached her hands up towards the African sky.

“Now it is up to us.” She said. “There is a lot of sky over Africa and we three must drain it of every bit of energy we can.”

“Wait ! I will join you.”

Not Ishel, but Tlal had decided to admit she knew how to harness the forces of nature in the sky above their heads. Fully dressed for once in heavy looking robes, the rogue warrior filled the vacant slot to Ruby’s left.

“Gather the energy, I will wield it.” Said Ruby.

“I understand.” Said Tlal.

Ruby turned and closed her eyes, it helped her concentration. Eyes were no use anyway, she would need other senses to feel for the energy up above the clouds. Senses all humans had probably once possessed, but lost as they adapted and changed. She felt the boundary between where the air was fast moving and cold and slow moving and warm. There it happened, it was where sprites formed and the worst storms began. More energy than a hundred atomic warheads and it was theirs for the taking. She began in a small way, by twisting some of the energy, forcing it to spin around in a huge invisible circle, high above Eastern Uganda. The circle was hers, the other three would add power to it, until it became a spinning vortex visible from most of Africa. Satellites would be sent to investigate, their orbits altered to allow them to see what was happening in a usually quiet part of the globe.

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Olga had been there before, she understood the anti-climax feeling after a period of extreme violence. Part of her mind had expected everyone in Budapest to know what she’d done, what she’d been through. It was unreasonable of course, but it felt mean that no one had organised a parade of some kind to honour the returning hero. There hadn’t even been a congratulatory call from Gregor, though an unexpected amount of money had arrived in her business bank account. Sent by a company in the Turks and Caicos Islands she’d never heard of.

“Thank you Gregor, I’ll take cash over a parade any day.” She muttered.

She was home and in truth, only the police would be interested in where she'd been and what she'd done. There had been a few bills waiting behind the door and an extra layer of dust on her furniture. Otherwise, she might have never been away. Not that she ever drifted into a deep melancholy, or at least not that often. Violence and losing people was all part of the business she was in. Little else earned the kind of money she'd just received from the cartel.

"I packed up their things and put them in the attic." Said Igor.

"Good.... Eventually someone will want them."

"Are you hungry?"

"Bless you Igor, coffee and.....something unhealthy...A burger I think."

Igor was still with her, though he hadn't enjoyed collecting together the few personal items Christophe and Aron had left in her house. One day a sad looking relative would ask about them, they always had in the past. Luca had been taken home and Pablo had only remained for an hour, before catching a plane to Paris to wait for Charlotte.

"Did someone mention food?" Said Jai.

"Come on, you can help me carry it back." Said Igor.

Igor knew several decent burger places, but always seemed to use the one that sold dreadful coffee. It was better than going herself though, or actually cooking something.

"Make sure they cook them fresh while you're there." She yelled at Igor's departing back.

"Will do." Shouted Jai.

Jai was only with her until he'd worked out if it was safe to visit his family in Mexico, before being reassigned by the cartel. Olga was still thinking about offering him Aron's old job. Jai would probably be expensive, but he was good. He'd survived to come home, which was downright miraculous when she thought about it.

"So, old friend.... How many emails have you been keeping for me?"

Her old desktop computer took the usual annoying amount of time to warm up, or whatever it was doing. Followed by a lot of disc thrashing that was a total mystery to her. She looked at her emails and felt a weird feeling in the pit of her stomach. Facing armed Mexicans with shotguns didn't scare her half as much as seeing she had over seven hundred unread emails.

"Oh, that can't be right.....Fuck."

Running a small and legit import export company was essential cover for her other operations. For some reason though, that side of her small business empire had become quite busy. A good two thirds of the emails were from companies asking about using her services. There was easily enough work to justify an extra salary, or...

"Jai is good with computers." She muttered.

It would kill two birds with one stone. One message in the muddle stood out, the name of the sender always grabbed her attention. A company in Italy who on the face of it, imported button of all things, from manufacturers in China. Really part of the cartel and the shipping manager, a Mr Miky Jang, was another of Gregor's aliases.

'My dear Olga,

I hope my favourite niece is in good health. I am very pleased with her recent exam results.

Please tell her to contact me as soon as possible.

Miky.'

So.... It looked like Charlotte was going to be given a lot of work by Gregor, which meant that she'd be involved too. Things were going to be busy.

"Jai, we need another couple of guys. Do you know anyone?" She shouted.

Damn, she'd forgotten he'd gone out for burgers and probably some dreadful coffee.

"I'm definitely going to offer Jai a job." She muttered.

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Kallina had done it all before. She looked east, well beyond Tororo. Any part of the sky would do, warm air and cold air rubbed against each other everywhere. All the noise of thunder, the destructive ability of lightning. Even the sprites which hurtled off into space like huge celestial fireworks. All of it, all that power, was generated by warm air rubbing against cold.

Friction.....Produced static electricity, which became.....Everything else. It was a cornucopia of free energy, once mankind worked out how to harness it. All that power was currently being channelled into a spinning ring of energy. When there was enough stored power, Ruby would use it all to dig a two mile deep hole in the ground, in a single night.

"No trying to hide now." Said Spider. "They can probably see that in London."

Kallina doubted that the rotating ring of power could be seen that far away, but Spider was right, there was no chance of hiding their position. They needed to do what needed to be done and leave, quickly.

"Is that enough?" Asked Tlal.

"No..... After here, there is the main tunnel." Said Ruby.

Charlotte was the real expert now, though it hurt Kallina to admit it, even to herself. The girl had a knack of mixing tracks of red into the rotating ring. Power hotter and more dangerous than anyone else could pull from the upper atmosphere. What really annoyed Kallina, was not understanding how Charlie did it.

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