

Ruby 3

Chapter 8 - Ragnarök

“He was over six feet tall and looked to be covered from head to foot in dark grey body armour. There had never been men dressed like that in the building before, or standing outside it. “What happened ?” She asked.”

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“Give him to me for an hour or so, I’ll get him to talk.” Said Spider.

KC Lacayo had been duct taped to a heavy chair dragged in from the kitchen. He claimed to want to answer all their questions, yet every time Ruby asked about the client who wanted her dead. He instantly passed out, or pretended to.

“The problem isn’t getting him to talk.” Said Sophie. “He’s happy to tell us just about anything since Ruby gave him her special whammy smile. It’s the blocks protecting certain memories that are the problem.”

“He’s faking it.” Said Spider. “No one falls asleep that easily or that often.”

He could tell by the looks exchanged between them, that the wunderkinds helping Ruby and Kallina, had considered the same thing. That was the unthinkable though. A middle aged human male with the ability to resist their various mind tricks.

“I’m not saying you’re wrong.” Said Kallina. “It is unlikely though, considering how much he has told us. No one knew he was born in Colombia for a start. Yet tonight he offered that information with very little persuasion.”

“Or he could be using the age old trick of lying to us.” Suggested Spider.

“No, he was under Ruby’s influence.” Said Charlotte. “I’m certain of it.”

“Spider is right, we can’t assume he’s under my control.” Said Ruby. “I’ve never met anyone I can’t influence if I try hard, but.....I need to ask the questions again, while looking at the memories they invoke.”

“Shall I wake him up ?” Asked Kallina.

Waking up the sleeping Colombian could be rather dramatic. Kallina had done it several times already and assured them it was the only way to drag KC out of unconsciousness.

“Are there long term mental effects from what we’re doing to him ?” Asked Sophie.

“Maybe, but do we care ?” Asked Kallina.

There were a lot of shrugs, as it seemed no one really did care if they might unintentionally lobotomise their reluctant house guest.

“Wake him up Kallina.....Gently as you can.” Said Ruby.

“There isn’t really a way.....I’ll try to be gentle, but no promises.”

“Put the gag back in.....I don’t want to hear him scream again.” Said Anna.

Kallina had told them the only way to wake up their captive had to be dramatic. Left to his own devices he’d lapse into a comma after a few hours and die. Bits of his brain were turned off in some way, set to remain in the human equivalent of standby mode. Unless of course; he was simply pretending to pass out. After fixing a loose gag back in his mouth, Kallina became Baba Yaga.

“This part makes me almost feel sorry for him.” Said Olga.

Spider had seen her do it a few times. Baba Yaga breathed on KC's neck, before quietly intoning what sounded like a spell. He didn't understand the words and he doubted if the sleeping Colombian knew them either. That didn't stop her spell having a dramatic effect.

"Oh, that can't be good for him." Said Sophie.

Baba Yaga became Kallina again, as KC tried to scream through the gag. He lurched forward, a look of terror in his eyes. He'd already pulled at the duct tape the other times he'd been woken up. His damaged skin began to bleed, as he screeched like a trapped animal and tried to break free.

"Shush, quiet now.....Quiet." Said Ruby, as she smiled at KC.

It would have looked miraculous, if Spider hadn't seen Ruby do it many times before. A man who'd been in a state of blind panic, relaxed and looked at Ruby as though she was someone he loved, deeply loved.

"I just want to confirm a few things." She said. "Where were you born KC?"

"Bogota, Colombia."

"Think about your first school, the street where you lived as a child."

"I hated Bogota, it's a shit hole."

For a few moments Ruby just smiled at KC, actually caressing his cheek on one occasion.

"He's telling us the truth, the memories are real." Said Ruby.

"Ask him if he's ever supplied assassins for the British security services." Said Spider.

"And if he says yes, what will you do?" Asked Ruby. "We really don't need any trouble with Foxy and his people. I'm definitely on the side of let sleeping dogs lie, when it comes to bad behaviour by those who are helping us."

"But supposing....."

"No Spider, I'm not asking him and let that be an end to it." Said Ruby.

"We're not a democracy." Added Sophie, with a grin.

"He has a head full of valuable secrets." Said Olga.

He'd have been disappointed in Ruby if she'd have given in to Olga.

"Which is my cue to clear the room." Said Ruby. "I'll need Kallina, Sophie and..... Charlotte to help me break the locks on some of his memories. And a guard, a ruffian to look after us in case KC tries something while we're in a trance."

"I'd never do that.....I love you." Said KC.

"You say that now.....Spider I think, if he'll join us?"

"Love to."

"Good. Now everyone else should go and wait in the lounge." Said Ruby.

"I'd like to stay too." Said Anna.

"Not this time Anna."

Sarah had been strangely quiet, though he heard her muttering at Anna as they left the spare bedroom. Something about Anna not being a wunderkind, or a long term friend of Ruby's. Spider wondered if they might square up to each other and fight it out one day.

"No one enters now until we're finished." Said Ruby. "I'm relying on you Spider, to throw out any uninvited guests."

"You can rely on me princess."

Did they talk to each other without words, by some form of telepathy? Ruby always denied it, but without talking to each other, the four women sat close to KC. So close their knees were touching him, their faces close enough for him to feel their breath.

"Do you trust me KC?" Asked Ruby.

“Yes of course, I love you.”

Kallina was behind him, her breath falling on his neck.

“You know I’d never hurt you, don’t you ?” She asked.

“Of course I do. I trust you completely.”

Sophie was to KC’s right. She leant forward and ran her fingers over his cheek, before kissing his neck.

“Do you trust me ?” She asked.

“Yes of course, I trust you, I love you all. I’d ever have sent those people after you if.....Please forgive me.”

“Of course we forgive you.” Said Sophie.

Charlotte was the last and Spider was beginning to understand what they were doing, the physical side of it at least. Touching, kissing and using your breath on someone’s skin, were well known interrogation techniques. Usually after someone had been through some sort of physical torture. The techniques were used as a means to gain their trust. The ultimate ‘good cop’ versus ‘bad cop’ idea.

“Do you love me, really love me ?” Asked Charlotte.

She turned his head gently towards her and kissed him on the lips.

“You’re so pretty.....Yes, I love you. I’d do anything for you.”

It carried on for some time, the four of them taking it in turns to touch KC, sometimes kissing him. All the time they asked him to confirm his trust in them. Occasionally Ruby would question his love, leading KC to actually start crying. There was something going on besides the physical, some kind of mental whammy. Sometimes as Ruby touched KC, Spider could almost feel it in the air, the power she was using on the Colombian. It almost caught Spider by surprise, when Ruby changed the routine.

“Tell me about the woman who tried to kill Olga ?” She asked.

“Oh her, one of the best. Russian, Svetlana from Kursk, a genuinely talented young woman. Such a pity she never lived to return home. The people she worked for were quite upset when she vanished.”

“Who did she usually work for ?”

“A Russian gang operating out of Vladivostok. People say the Russian mobsters aren’t as good as the cartels. What they lack in refinement..... They make up for in brutality and sheer enthusiasm. Not that they know I tempted her away with huge piles of dollars.”

“Aren’t you afraid they might find out ?” Asked Ruby.

“Hmmmmm they might sulk for a while.....I’ve supplied people for them. That is the beauty of being a head hunter in this game, everyone needs you, eventually. I’m too useful to kill.....”

“A neat trick.” Said Sophie.

“Oh yes, no one has ever accused me of being stupid.” Said KC.

Spider actually jumped when Ruby turned towards him and winked. It wasn’t something she did that often, and given the current situation, it felt weird.

“Have you ever supplied people for the British security services KC ?” She asked.

“Some, though they’re a long way from being on my top customers list. I get the feeling they don’t have the money to spare these days.”

Spider mouthed ‘details’ at Ruby, but she just turned her head and ignored him.

“Is there anything you won’t tell me KC ?”

“Nothing Ruby, you have my word.”

Here it came, the moment when KC went back into a comma, or finally told Ruby who wanted her dead and was prepared to pay large amounts of money to get it done.

"If you refuse to answer my question, we won't be friends anymore." Said Ruby.

"Upset Ruby and you'll have to leave here." Said Kallina.

"You'll cease being my friend." Added Charlotte.

"I'd hate you." Said Sophie.

Poor KC, he was crying again and looking ridiculously upset.

"Why do you say these things?" He asked. "I will tell you anything. Try me..... Ask me anything you want. My life is an open book to you."

"This Svetlana you hired." Said Ruby.

"A real Svetlana, no alias..... Svetlana Serova."

"Who did you hire her for? Who was your client?"

KC didn't topple over, which was an improvement on the last time the question had been asked. He looked at the ceiling for a full two minutes, maybe three.

"I don't know their name." He eventually said.

"You worked for someone and didn't know their name?" Asked Kallina.

He seemed to have forgotten she was there, twisting himself round to look at her.

"I'm not a fool, it's all about recommendations and introductions." Said KC. "There's the son of someone I knew once, someone who made his money in Hong Kong, before the mainland Chinese ruined the place. Lionel, he's in banking now young Lionel and doing rather well. He introduced me to the client, someone with a lot of cash burning a hole in their pocket."

"So you never met the client?" Asked Ruby.

"I met them, if you could call it meeting. I wasn't too worried about them being a little strange.

Lionel had vouched for them you see.....Lionel Ostby."

The name rang a bell, Spider knew it was important. Just after they'd returned from east of the Caspian Sea, a few lines of gossip read out of a paper by Ruby. It had been over a Thai meal and a bottle of wine, Sarah had been there too. Ruby beat him to it, but he'd have got there.

"Does Lionel have a wife called Monique?" Asked Ruby.

"Yes, do you know them?" Asked KC.

"Not her, but I did know her father."

Know seemed a weird word, considering Ruby had thrown Monique's father off a hotel roof in Paris.

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George Polandrous had been to visit Frank's wife. He'd taken her flowers and even offered to pay for the funeral. He really had tried his best to make all the right noises.

"Don't worry about money. Frank's salary will be there in the bank ever month, until the death in service insurance claim gets sorted out."

A radio talk show had once portrayed him as the unacceptable face of capitalism, one of the evil hedge fund managers who were ruining the country. There had been a small group outside his house for weeks afterwards, all of them chanting 'scum' well into the night. All of that was nothing to the feeling of being hated when Frank's wife looked at him. She'd been polite of course, which made it worse. It was all in her eyes, the look that screamed 'you caused the death of my husband, you and your crooked foundation.' It took him most of the car journey back to the office, to realise he might have been projecting his own feelings of guilt. Penny was hovering in the reception area when he got back.

"How did it go?" She asked.

“Not good, but I’m glad I went. Can you make sure no overzealous accounts person knocks Frank off the payroll ?”

“Yes, I’ll keep an eye on that.”

His private elevator was working again. Fully checked over, various circuit boards changed. The engineer had assured Penny it was now perfect, though he still felt nervous as he stepped into it. Penny actually jumped in after him, as if distrusting the lift doors.

“Where are Rory and his merry men today ?” He asked her.

“Rory is out today. His men are here, hanging around and making everyone nervous. I shoed them out of reception, they made the place look like something out of a gangster movie. All that said..... I am glad they’re here.”

“Me too..... Have you seen Trudy and Lau today ?”

“They’re in your office, pacing about and muttering to each other.”

Someone had provided them with a projector and the recording of the woman in his office, was now ten feet high and being shown on the wall behind his desk.

“Yes, I can fill in that gap.” Trudy was telling Lau. “Rory’s people disrupted the floor area, but I can still follow the separate temporal lines.”

George realised he wasn’t watching the recording from that night, he knew every frame, he’d watched it through that often. Trudy didn’t press any buttons, she waved her hand to freeze the image.

“We’re recording as we go.” She told him. “Getting an image of them from every angle, especially her. I can’t see her face appearing on the TV though, one of those ‘have you seen this woman,’ programmes.”

George walked right up to the projection, running his hand over her image.

“Think of it as a hologram.” Said Lau. “Built up slice by slice as Trudy looks back through dozens of temporal lines. Soon we’ll have a picture of her.....So clear that it’ll look like a publicity photo.”

The face on the wall was already clear enough for him, too damn clear. She wasn’t totally human, that much was obvious from her features. Her eyes were wrong too, especially now he could see them in colour. Red eyes, the colour of hot coals with flecks of orange.

“I’m trembling just looking at her.” Said Penny.

“She is rather impressive I’m looking forward to meeting her in battle.” Said Lau.

“He means it, you’ll get used to Lau.” Said Trudy.

Trudy moved her fingers as she waved her hand and he was on the screen, the woman’s male companion of that night. Again the image was so clear it could have been taken in full daylight by a professional photographer.

“He’s no less impressive than her.” Said Trudy. “Older we think, definitely more lines on his face than hers. By tonight we’ll have pictures to show you, Foxy and send to Ruby.”

“How are you doing this temporal lines business ?” Asked George.

They were looking at each other, probably working out how to explain it in the simplest terms imaginable.

“I don’t mind the dumbed down version.” He said. “Just give me enough to understand it, roughly.”

“Me too, dumb down all you like.” Said Penny.

“Einstein said time existed just to stop everything happening at once.” Said Trudy.

Einstein, she was already talking about Einstein in the first sentence. George smiled at Penny and reconciled himself to not understanding a word of whatever Trudy still had to say.

“Really, really simple..... Please.” Said Penny.

"Einstein was right." Said Lau.

"All the temporal lines are still there, still happening." Said Trudy. "If a lot is happening in a particular location, they can be hard to see, but they're still there, forever."

"That sounds impossible." Said George.

"It would, you're human." Said Lau.

"Don't be rude Lau..... Sorry." Said Trudy. "Your mind made sense of the world when you were small George. Up is up, down is down and time is linear, always. I'll mention him again.... Einstein said reality is a very persistent illusion."

"Einstein was right that time too." Said Lau.

"I begin to understand." Said Penny. "Past, present, future....All still there, all happening now."

"Yes, sort of, though the idea of now is fairly meaningless. Think of it as a very old and worn VHS tape." Said Trudy.

"You've heard of VHS tapes ?" Asked George.

"Oh yes, Kallina used to wake us up every Christmas." Said Lau. "We watched an old VHS recording of The Sound of Music."

"It was in Hungarian, part of our training." Said Trudy. "Anyway, as I was saying.....The tape gets used over and over again, until parts are just a snowstorm. I have the same problem looking at temporal lines. We're lucky though, these ones are recent and fairly undisturbed."

Penny had a look on her face, the look people probably get when they become vegans, or discover God, or both.

"Can you travel to the other temporal lines ?" She asked.

"Depends who you ask." Said Trudy.

"What do you think ?" Asked Penny.

"No."

Penny still had that look on her face.

"Can you look at the future lines ?" She asked.

"Ohhhh complicated." Said Lau.

"Let's just say yes, but the mechanics of it are outside of the dumbed down version." Said Trudy.

"Ohhh, really. I feel as though I've been teased." Said Penny.

"Can you use this to find where they dumped Frank ?" Asked George.

Again the two wunderkinds exchanged a look, which usually meant the answer was going to be one he didn't want to hear.

"We will try." Said Lau. "It's just that they probably incinerated the body, or weighted it and dropped it into a deep lake somewhere."

Trudy actually held his hand for a fraction of a second.

"Once we're finished here, I will try my best George." She said. "I wouldn't get your hopes up though."

"It's just.....His wife doesn't think anyone is doing anything." Said George.

"It's my day for disappointing people." Said Trudy. "Would you like to see the world as I see it, just for a few moments ?"

"Oh yes." Said Penny.

"Penny will kill me if I say no." Said George.

The room didn't vanish, it just became very transparent. George could see himself and Penny, running back through time, everything speeded up. When the volume kicked in, it was when they'd

been entering the room. There was an image of them both in incredible detail, entering the room and talking to Lau and Trudy. Trudy waved her hand and the image froze.

"That's not a recording it's you." Said Trudy. "It will exist forever, because past present and future are nothing but an illusion."

"Albeit a very persistent one." Said Lau.

"So we exist forever?" Said Penny.

"That..... Falls outside of the dumbed down version." Said Trudy. "Ladies and gentlemen, please return your seats and tray-tables to their full upright positions, and extinguish all smoking material, as we're about to land in this reality."

~ ~

There had been a message on her phone at about six that morning, while she'd been in the shower. There had been an incident at the office, though the office was still open, all the equipment functioning as usual. An odd message really, but she'd had a few strange messages in the early hours since starting work for Foxy. A courtesy message it said and she was expected to start work at her usual time.

"I'm sure the service only hires Zen masters to send out messages." She muttered.

Lily still had the same car, even though it was now getting on a bit. Her much loved white mini. She drove it to the usual spot in the car park and nothing looked any different. She even waved at the man who operated the car crusher and he waved back.

"Someone probably dropped a plate in the canteen." She muttered. "Always turning every silly thing into a drama."

The front of the building was definitely different. Two ground floor windows had been boarded up and there was a faint, but unmistakable smell of burning. The swipe card in her bag was useless, the front door was gone, replaced with something that looked like a rusty metal door. A very solid looking rusty metal door, with lots of rivets around the edges.

"Fuck." She said.

The armed men outside the building made her nervous. Actually there were always armed men posted around the building. They'd been discreet about it, keeping their guns concealed. These men looked as though they'd dropped out of a combat computer game and there were a lot of them. What mesmerised Lily were the serious looking weapons they were carrying.

"It's alright miss.....The office is still functioning. I will need to see your card though."

He was over six feet tall and looked to be covered from head to foot in dark grey body armour. There had never been men dressed like that in the building before, or standing outside it.

"What happened?" She asked.

"A major incident happened last night miss, that's all I can tell you. Keep to the main corridors and go straight to your office. The building is functioning as normal."

Functioning seemed a weird word to use, though the service tended to use weird words. There was a strong smell of burning in the corridor and the sound of people shouting somewhere. It was a first for Lily, she'd never felt mildly scared of going to work before.

"Straight there..... Foxy will know what the fuck is happening." She muttered. "Straight to my desk..... Everything will be fine."

At the end of the corridor she turned left, towards the stairs which would take her to their office on the first floor. It wasn't the three men that made her scream, or the hazmat suits two of them were wearing. Lily screamed because one of the men was probably dead. There was a lot of blood and they were placing him in a body bag. It seemed a strange thing to do if he wasn't dead.

"Don't do that..... Please." She yelled.

The words made sense to her, the men even stopped folding the dead man's arms into the bag. Lily screamed, until someone was turning her around, hugging her. Foxy, she recognised the smell of the shampoo he used, before she recognised the voice.

"I'm so sorry Lily. They were supposed to have done all this by now."

"What happened?"

"A few of Ruby's bad guys paid us a visit last night, four we think. Two guards were killed and another seriously injured. One of them was killed too, one of the rogue Das Geheimnis."

"The guards managed to kill one?" She asked.

"Yes they did. These creatures may be tough, but they're obviously not indestructible. The MOD are sending a team over to transport its body to a lab for analysis."

Lily had no real idea where the idea came from. She'd screamed at seeing a dead guard being put in a body bag.... Yet just knowing Ruby's bad guys could be killed wasn't enough, she needed to see it with her own eyes.

"Can I see it?" She asked. "It'll help..... Seeing it I mean."

"Are you sure..... The body hasn't been cleaned up Lily. There will be a lot of blood."

"I'm sure."

"Alright, it's not far..... We'll need to be quick, the MOD team are on their way."

~ ~

Olga received the summons and wondered where the point had been. The time when she ceased to be Ruby's mentor and became one of her acolytes. A willing and devoted follower of course, but Ruby rarely seemed to need her advice these days.

"Ruby wants to see you." Anna had told her. "She's in the summer house near the back fence."

Olga had seen the rickety structure and calling it a summer house was being kind. Fine if it didn't rain though and it gave Ruby privacy in what had become an overcrowded house.

"You wanted to see me?"

At one time they'd winged it without a plan, now Ruby wrote things in a spiral bound notebook. She had it open on a table that looked as rickety as the summer house. A notebook with superhero characters on the cover. An accident, a joke, or Ruby trying to be slightly ironic?

"Yes.....Come in, sit.....I think the wicker chair is safe." Said Ruby. "Every time I decide who is going where, it doesn't look right. I need your help, especially with the gunmen you brought with you."

She could see her own name, even if it was upside down. There was a list of names under hers, a few crossed out and one ringed round in green ink.

"They're only borrowed and Kallina brought them here." She said.

"Who did you borrow them from?"

"Someone who owed me a favour, it's a long story. They're cartel men, experienced and good with weapons."

"Do you think we could keep them for a while?" Asked Ruby. "I'd pay them of course..... Far better to use people you know than hire mercenaries."

"If one of them gets killed it'll bankrupt me. I'll need to pay compensation Ruby, huge amounts of compensation."

"Hmmmmmmm."

Ruby looked down at her list and Olga could see Pablo's name, with five names written underneath it. One of the thirteen had been busy, even she didn't know all the men's names.

"I can arrange something if compensation becomes an issue." Said Ruby. "Pablo seems to be their leader. Do you think if I offer him enough, he can persuade the others to stay ? Sophie likes him by the way, which is always a good sign."

"Pablo likes her, he thinks she's being hilariously funny, when really Sophie.....Is just being Sophie. Offer him enough and I'm certain he'll stay. As for the others ? I can't really say. They might all have a wife and six kids to get home to, though I doubt it."

Ruby gave Pablo's name a green tick on her list.

"Ok, I'll talk to Pablo next." Said Ruby. "I want you to go to Paris for me and find the connection between Monique Ostby and the rogue Das Geheimnis. There must be one, she obviously isn't hiring expensive assassins for fun."

"You did throw her father off a roof." Said Olga.

"He was trying to kill me and I wasn't used to my gifts then. You're right though, I did throw him off the roof of Malou's hotel. I threw him so far that the Paris police searched the wrong group of buildings. Monique might be helping our enemies to get revenge.... But after so many years ? It doesn't feel right."

"So I go to Paris and find out what Monique is up to ?"

"Yes, stay at Malou's hotel, she always seems to know what's going on. And I'm sure she'll make you very welcome."

"Who do I get to take with me ?" Asked Olga. "Your pen is covering the list."

"Assuming we keep Pablo, you can take him and two of his men. I think Igor is going to be our guest until he heals up, so you'll need Pablo. We both know this will end up with you trying to get information out of Monique, so you'll need to take one of the thirteen with you."

"There are other ways of getting people to talk." Said Olga.

Ruby gave her a look for a fraction of a second, a look that made her regret the suggestion.

"She's the daughter of Henri Gervex, a national hero in France. He ran the East European desk at the DGSE for years."

"The man you threw off a roof." Said Olga.

"Yes, the man I threw off a roof. I think we'll treat pulling out his daughter's fingernails as a last resort..... So who do I have spare ?"

"I want Charlotte."

"No....George needs Trudy and Lau and Eugenie is looking after Nari's child. So, out of the people here, I could spare Imran or Nari. I wouldn't take much persuasion to let you have both."

"Just let me have Charlotte." Said Olga.

"Why the sudden obsession with Charlotte ?"

"We both know what she can do Ruby. The storm in the South China seas..... What she did to those street thugs in Vladivostok. I know that if she's watching my back, she won't hesitate to do what needs doing."

"What do you mean by needs doing ?" Asked Ruby.

"You know damn well what I mean."

"Alright, you get Charlie. Though I will be talking to her before she leaves."

Ruby put a green tick next to Charlotte's name. Olga had got what she wanted, which always made her relax, sometimes too much.

"All that crazy talk from KC about working for monsters Ruby. He seemed obsessed with talk about wolves and..... He even went on about Ragnarök of all things. Was it all madness ? What or who do you think we're going to be fighting ?"

“KC’s description of people hiding misshapen bodies with elongated heads.... It all fits the rogue Das Geheimnis. Using Henri Gervex’s daughter makes sense too, they can hardly walk the streets of Paris or Budapest.”

“Not without causing a panic.” Said Olga “Ragnarök though ? That’s a bit wild.”

Ruby turned the page of her notebook. Olga could just make out Ragnarök and a lot of scribbled notes below it.

“I can see the rogues believing opening the gateway in the Great Rift will bring about Ragnarök. In a way we’ve seen it, or rather the view of it given in the device. A final battle between the monsters and giants on one side and the Gods on the other. Such a battle might well cause the destruction we were shown.”

“If the rogues are the monsters, does that put the thirteen into the role of Gods ?” Asked Olga.

Ruby actually laughed.

“No of course not, the rogues will view themselves as Gods, with us as the monsters. Right, I’ll talk to Pablo.....Besides airline tickets, is there anything else you need for a trip to Paris ?”

“A passport of some kind.”

Ruby ticked Kallina’s name in green ink, even though it was already circled in green.

“Yes, though she will moan about it..... I’m going to use Kallina as a run around for a while. Let me talk to her first though. She can pick up your passport and anything else you might need from your home. Then she can book the cartel guys out of their hotel and bring their bags here.”

“Oh, you won’t be popular.” Said Olga.

“I know, I might see her first and get it over with.”

~ ~

“Look but no touching.” Said Foxy. “The MOD won’t appreciate your DNA contaminating any samples they might take.”

“I won’t, this is as close as I want to get.” Said Lily.

Three feet away from the dead creature on the table was fine. Its clothing still hid most of his body, though the lack of breasts and bulge in his trousers, left no doubt as to the gender of the dead monster. Yes, monster, there was no other way to think of it. A head that went back too far to be human and those legs....

“It’s a monster..... To think poor Ruby has to fight these things.” She said.

“She has us to help her.” Said Foxy.

“Yes, she has us..... How did the guards kill it ?”

“We got lucky. Ever since terrorists tried to drive a car through the wall at Catterick, our guards carry a few armour piercing rounds. It was Bob Wilson of all people, the youngest of the guards. These creatures were appearing out of thin air and he got lucky. As this one appeared right in front of him, he put four AP rounds into its chest. Heavy brute, it took a dozen men to drag it in here.”

There was something about the creature, the way its clothes bulged out where no human had body parts. It looked and felt so alien.

“What were they looking for ?” She asked.

“Obviously something to do with Ruby. I think they were on a fishing trip that went wrong. I doubt if they expected armed guards and such fierce resistance. Big as they are, they vanished quickly enough after one of them was killed.”

“I’m glad I asked to see it.” She said. “That’s enough though. Can we go ?”

“Yes of course..... I can sign you off as sick for the day if it’s all been too upsetting ?”

“No, I’ll be fine..... If our office hasn’t been damaged ?”

“Where you sit is fine, though for some reason they vandalised my office. One of them spray painted Ragnarök on the wall behind my desk.”

“That’s weird.”

“It’s a long way beyond weird Lily.”

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