**Chapter Eighteen: Decisions Decisions**

**Year 1991, Washington DC, United States of America**

**Dr. Jonathan Thorn, PhD**

After the dramatic exchange, nobody seemed to want to stick around the agitated Melisa and portals started opening all around the ballroom as people decided to leave. A few minutes later, the room was empty except for Percy, Melisa, Sara and me.

“Where did you send my brother and sister?”

“Why does it matter? No good can come out of meeting them.”

“However bad things may be, they are still his family. I think that he should at lest be allowed to speak to them.”

“Well then, it is a good thing that what you think doesn’t matter. This is none of your business mercenary. There is no money to be made, no profit to be gained. If you think that you can benefit from this situation you are sorely mistaken.”

“Is that all I am to you? A selfish, money grubbing killer who only moves for profit? Is it so hard to believe that I want to help the only person around here that doesn’t treat me like dirty garbage?”

“I’m sorry Sara. I’m was just so upset because of those idiots that I starting spouting nonsense. I know you are not a bad person and I know that you are not nearly as nasty as your reputation.”

“Fine, apology accepted. Besides, its not like it isn’t something I haven’t heard a hundred times before. Now lets get back to the main subject. I don’t think there is any harm in letting Jonathan speak with his brother and sister. Its not like they can carry him off under yoyur nose. They can’t even leave without your permission let alone escape with Jonathan in tow.”

“Fine. I’ve put them in a hotel in mirror world. I’ll send you there.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll go with Jonathan to make sure that they don’t do anything to him. You know my history with them so you should know that you can trust me.”

Melisa looked like she was reassured by Sara’s words and with a wave of her hands, we were transported to a place that was obviously a hotel lobby.

“Welcome to the Serene Palace hotel, how may I help you?”

“Hi, I am looking for a Thomas and Olivia Blackthorn, can you help me?”

“Oh, are you talking about the party of four that just arrived? Let me call their room to check, who should I say is looking for them?”

“Tell them it is Jonathan.”

“John?”

“Hey Thomas.”

“John! I didn’t get a chance to talk to you before we were booted out back there. You got yourself in quite a mess, didn’t you?”

“Yeah, it has been one hell of a ride. “

“Are you okay? Are you handling things well?”

“I might have handled it better if you guys had told me about this things from the beginning.”

“Don’t be like that. The only reason that Mom didn’t tell you was to protect you.”

“Protect me? Is that why she got me sealed?”

“The seal was necessary to suppress…, wait, you can’t know about the seal, at least the specifics or it would have unraveled.”

“Hmm, so that is why nobody is willing to talk to me about it.”

“Damn it John! Do you have any idea what you almost made me do!?”

“I think that we have already established that I do not know. Maybe you can tell me.”

“This is not a joke John. You need to take this seriously. Things are particularly bad right now and there are many people after you, that is why Mom wants you back at the mansion. That is the safest place for you.”

“I was under the impression that this was a place that could keep me safe from anybody coming after me.”

“It is true that nobody can hurt you while you are here, but that only applies to people other than Medusa and Perseus. What happens when they decide that you are too big of a threat? They may seem pleasant on the outside but you have seen that they aren’t the passifists that they pretend to be. The moment that they decide that you are too dangerous to let live, they will kill you and don’t pretend that there is no chance of that. You must have already noticed something from the weird way they treat you. You must have noticed that they fear you. These people aren’t your allies John, this is not some happy fantasy land where you can live happily ever after.”

“That’s funny Tommy, Melisa told me something similar. She told me that you have other motives other than familial love to approach me. She told me not to trust you because the organization that you work for are not very good people.”

“Ofcourse she would say that, she would say anything to drive a wedge between us.”

“So your organization doesn’t kill innocent people?”

“It is easy to point fingers and criticize but things aren’t so simple. What we do might seem bad but we only do it to prevent something worse.”

“So you really are responsible for countless wars and atrocities? Jesus Tommy, are you the ones responsible for the way things are around the world right now? Are you really responsible for the current status quo where people all over the world die from perfectly preventable diseases and drought because people are slowly being taught not to care?”

“We have to make the hard choices because nobody else can. History has taught us that a perfect world cannot exist. Two world wars, the whole sale slaughter of the red Indians and the inhuman spread of slavery have already taught us that we cannot stop evil in the world, we can only manage it and make sure that it doesn’t get out of control. Does that mean that people will suffer? Does it mean that we have to abandon some people in favor of the bigger picture? The answer is yes. We are willing to cover our hands in blood, we are willing to damn our own souls to the depths of hell so that the good in humanity could be preserved.”

“Is that the same reason that you used when you wiped out Hiroshima and Nagasaki?Melisa told me that you were willing to sacrifice anything to achieve your goals, even your family. You are a zealot Tommy, how can I trust you with my safety? How can I know that you won’t turn around and sacrifice me for your cause because you think it is necessary?”

“Will you trust your own family or some strangers you have only known for a day? Even if you don’t trust me, you must trust Mom. If she had wanted to do anything to you, it would have been as simple as snapping her fingers but instead, she went to great lengths to protect you. She didn’t even stop to consider our cause when she hid you from anyone and everone who was a threat to you. If things hadn’t gone wrong, you would have lived a normal danger free life without being caught up in all that shit. Mom loves you John and she has always acted to keep you safe. If there is a single person that you can trust right now, it is mom.”

”Fine, I might not trust your organization but I do trust mom, but that doesn’t matter. I am stuck here and I cannot escape.”

“You don’t have to worry about that. I have made arrangements for you to leave this place but all of them will be for naught if you don’t leave right now. After what happened today, it is just a matter of time before Medusa puts restrictions on you and if that happens, your chances for escape become zero. We only have one chance and that is right now.”

“You are the infamous Assasin Ember, right? I would like to hire you to escort my brother to safety. I have hired the ferryman to help him escape and everything should be alright but I would feel better if I knew there was someone there to protect him. As for payment, name your price, whatever you ask, we will pay it.”

“I will go with John but I am not doing it for you. You can keep your filthy money, I would rather die than receive your blood money.”

“Whatever, as long as you take the commission, I don’t care about our past history or what you think about us. Just take John to The alley two blocks down and the ferryman will be waiting for you there. I will wait for you at the mansion.”

We left the hotel in a rush by the urging of my brother and Sara led me to a small motel to change her clothes and get her guns before she took me to the aforementioned alleyway. We walked into the narrow space until we reached the brick wall at the other end but there was no sign of anybody waiting for us. I thought that we had arrived early and we would have to wait for the ferry amn but the brick wall started to waver like a mirage and collapsed into grey mist, revealing a cloacked man standing atop a gondola similar to those that could be found on the waterways of venice floatin on gray mist that now covered the ground upto my knees. The man wore a black clook with a larhe hood so his face was covered but I could see that his hand was old and withered when they became visible as he threw a something towards me. I caught the object and when I looked at it, it was a small wooden bead strung=up on wooden tongs.”

“Courtesy of your brother. Put it on, it will hide the stench of your power and keep the flies away when we reach the outside. Now get on the boat, our window will close in half an hour and if we can’t make it, you will have to wait another month to get a second chance.”

We didn’t tarry any longer and boarded the boat which soundlessly drifted off until there was nothing around us but white smoke.

“What is this place?”

“It is one of the forbidden zones of Sanctuary, the realm of mist and illusions. This place is really weird, they say that it is a place between worlds that doesn’t really exist, others say that it is a prison where Medusa keeps the most dangerous entities locked up so that they don’t escape. Whatever the case maybe, the ferryman has found a way out of the sanctuary through this place. Becareful though, the spirits and ghosts that inhabit this place are malicious. If you pay too much attention to them, their whispers will drive you insane.”

“…your mother never loved you…”

“… you are a useless waste of space. Even now you are still nothing more than a pawn that is being thrown around…”

“…your mother was afraid of you. You try to hide from it, but you have already seen the fear in her eyes…”

“…your family is evil. They are ruthless butchers pretending to be benovelent gardeners pruning the bushes…”

“…everyone you know will betray you. Nobody sees you as a person anymore…”

“…you were never a hero. You were just a confused drug addict who couldn’t handle what the world threw at him…”

“…you were sealed for a reason. You are a monster, why else would you be sealed…”

“…what has happened will always happen, what will happen has already happened. Nothing changes. You have come on a fools errand…”

“…your foolishness knows no bounds. You are a lamb being led to the slaughter, refusing to stay safe, choosing to be led by your nose instead…”

“…she comes. Against knowledge or reason, she comes. Against fate and time, she comes. Guided only by the light of her love, she comes…”

Soft whispers started to snaked their way into my ears. They started out quiet but the more I listened to them, the more they got louder until they buily up into a defeaning creshendo. Like the most insidious poison, they spread through me, ignoring all my attempts to stop them. The seemingly gentle voices spoke unimaginably painful words that grated harshly against my soul, slowly wearing me down. Some of the things they said were painfully familiar thoughts plucked right from my mind, tormenting me with my own weaknesses and insecurities, the rest were things that I didn’t even understand but where somehow equally painful, like they were poking at scars that I didn’t even know I had.

I was desperately trying to shut out the voices that were drowning me when I felt the sensation of a hand slapping me on the back of my head, pulling me back from the abyss that I had nearly fallen into.

“Don’t pay attention to them. If you ignore them, they can’t hurt you.”

I tried to follow Sara’s advice, but it was harder than it sounded. She had to slap me several times to save me from the voices before we reached the end of our journey.

When the smoke cleared, the boat stopped in the same alley that we had come from.

“Was there some kind of mistake?”

“No. We aren’t in the mirror world anymore. We are in the real DC. We have left the sanctuary and are back to the surface world.”