

THE HIDDEN PEOPLE

Episode 3.14

"The Ties That Bind"

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TEASER

136. The scene of Morgan's attack. Distant sirens, shouting, screaming, the crackle of fires burning. Shaylee and Mackenna arrive by stepping sideways.

MACKENNA

This is as close as we can get. Come on; it's still a few blocks away.

They jog closer, and the sounds of destruction become louder.

SHAYLEE

Mackenna, be careful. There will be a lot of humans around the scene. We need to keep a low profile: subtle magic only, and stay away from any camera phones.

MACKENNA

If we hurry, we might be able to catch Morgan.

SHAYLEE

You really want to go against her again? After she was able to do all this?

MACKENNA

If the building fell on her, too, she might be weakened. It's our best shot to take her down. And that shrieking bitch is going down.

They stop running.

SHAYLEE

Oh, gods.

They arrive at the scene. There's less screaming, shouting; everyone who can run away has. Sirens are still too far away. It's kind of eerie quiet--smoke and dust fill the air.

MACKENNA

I can't see anything, can you?

SHAYLEE

(coughs)

No, there's too much smoke and dust.

MACKENNA

She was standing on the basketball court when she screamed, so she'll be right in the middle.

SHAYLEE

We can't climb over all this rubble. That apartment building has a fire escape to the roof. We can get a better view up there.

They climb the metal stairs and reach the roof. They walk to the edge to survey the damage.

SHAYLEE (CONT'D)

The whole stadium, all those people...

MACKENNA

She's gone. Everything pushes outward from the circle in the middle. That must have been where she was standing. She's long gone by now. Fuck!

The sirens get louder, and closer.

SHAYLEE

Mackenna, we should go.

MACKENNA

We should be able to do something... something to help.

SHAYLEE

This is going to be breaking news everywhere; you can't be seen. And there are first responders on the way.

MACKENNA

They don't have magic!

SHAYLEE

Your magic can't bring back the dead,
Mackenna! There's nothing we can do.
I'm sorry.

Some silence.

MACKENNA

Fine. Give me the chalk.

She draws a chalk circle.

LEE

Shaylee is right, on both counts. There
is nothing they can do, and it will be
the main news story for weeks--there
will be at least one home video online
that, if you know where to look, shows
two figures seemingly disappear on a
rooftop in the distance.

Stepping sideways departure.

LEE (CONT'D)

The human world will look for an
explanation, a reason, a group or
person to blame for the vicious and
meaningless loss of life on that day.
But sometimes there is no bigger plan.
For some monsters, destruction for
destruction's sake is enough.

END TEASER

137. Nissa's apartment. Tech landscape music. Nissa's on
her computer, keys typing, mouse clicking.

NISSA

Sorry Mack and Shaylee left you behind.

RILEY

It's by design. I'm the back-up for
when things go ass-wise.

NISSA

But this has to be boring. The waiting. I'm sure Thomas is whipping up something delicious for Alfie and the other Mackenna, if you would rather--

RILEY

Nope. I've got my orders, and I'll follow them.

NISSA

"Orders"?

RILEY

Oh, uh, I mean...hey, I'm trying to think of a good catch-phrase for when I rush in to save the day!

NISSA

Riley...

RILEY

At first I was thinking

(British accent)

"Cheers, love! The cavalry's here!"

(Normal)

But I'm not British, and no one except Alfie would get it. Maybe, like, a pun with my name?

NISSA

Riley...

RILEY

Yeah, but what if I used my name to replace "really"? Like, "it's a Riley good thing I'm here"?

Crickets. Literal crickets.

RILEY (CONT'D)

Wow, you have a "bad joke" hotkey on your soundboard?

NISSA

I'm friends with Alfie.

RILEY

Fair enough. I'll work on it.

NISSA

What "orders," Riley?

RILEY

Well, uh, Mack said that, you know, with the time Wodan mentioned coming up, maybe you shouldn't be alone?

NISSA

It should still be weeks away.

RILEY

Yeah, and Wodan's a bad guy! He lies! Better be safe than sorry.

NISSA

I don't need a babysitter.

RILEY

But I'm the cool kind of babysitter! We can eat ice cream for dinner and watch R-rated movies.

NISSA

You sure you wouldn't rather do all that with Alfie?

RILEY

That's our Tuesday nights. C'mon, don't think of it as babysitting. We're just two gal-pals hanging out.

NISSA

Fine. I guess I can't make you leave.

RILEY

That's the spirit!

Silence as Nissa types.

RILEY

So, whatcha working on?

NISSA

You know, computer hacky stuff. Don't worry about it; it's not important.

RILEY

You know I think everything you do is so cool. I wish I had half the talent you do.

NISSA

It's more experience than talent.

RILEY

Then, I wish I had double the experience that I have!

NISSA

Only one way to get there. Grab my extra laptop.

RILEY

Yay! What're we looking for?

NISSA

It's a who. Trying to find a man who attended the "Music and Meditation for Peace Fest" in 1991.

RILEY

Any man, or a specific one?

(types)

Actually, we could probably find all of them. M-M-P isn't exactly Woodstock sized.

NISSA

Start with all. After you get names, find current address, and then physical characteristics from their motor vehicle record.

RILEY

Could be across multiple states.

NISSA

So multiple databases to search.

RILEY

What's the best way to compile the data?

NISSA

You ever work with pivot tables?

RILEY

(groans)

MUSICAL TRANSITION

138. Shaylee's beach house with the rest of the team. Stepping sideways arrival as Shaylee and Mackenna return to the rest of the team.

THOMAS

Mackenna, you're okay! What happened with Morgan?

MACKENNA

She's gone.

SHAYLEE

We couldn't get close enough to the circle to follow her. And we couldn't find any reason why she would attack there.

ALFIE

Other than, you know, the massive amount of people congregated in one place?

SHAYLEE

That isn't what the Hidden People do. They have contracts and rituals, and--

THOMAS

Replacing children with changelings?

SHAYLEE

Yes, but even that was sneaky and restricted--a limited number on a specific day, and the human world was never the wiser--but this is blatant

and obvious. Other than the magic scream, this feels too human.

FETCH

The television is also treating this as though it were a non-magical attack. The people speaking at us continually compare it to a fractional number.

ALFIE

Maybe that's a good thing. The world at large figuring out that magic is real would create massive panic. And piss off a bunch of people that didn't get their Hogwarts letters.

MACKENNA

I'm pretty sure you cried at your eleventh birthday party because you didn't get mail by owl.

ALFIE

Shut up. No, I didn't. I got over it. Eventually.

MACKENNA

In high school.

ALFIE

Which counts as eventually.

SHAYLEE

Responding like this is an act of human aggression might be the best thing. If Morgan didn't have some magical reason to attack, if she did it just to kill as many people as possible...

MACKENNA

Then all the precautions, the event cancelling, the increased security... might stop her from attacking again.

Thomas's phone alert.

ALFIE

I'm really hoping we didn't just jinx it.

THOMAS

It's not an attack...it's an Amber Alert.

Thomas's phone alert.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

And another one.

Thomas's phone alert.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Uh-oh.

FETCH

Who is Amber and why is she alarming us?

Shaylee's phone alert.

SHAYLEE

That's my European cell. I'm not looking forward to the roaming charges on...oh no.

THOMAS

More kids?

SHAYLEE

Yes. They're just babes.

THOMAS

Same here. All infants taken from their homes, no sign of intruders.

MACKENNA

We need to know how many. Nissa...oh.

ALFIE

Maybe it was a bad idea to give our two techies a vacation. Does anyone else know how to computer?

SHAYLEE

I'm scrolling the headlines on my phone now. There have to be at least two dozen from around the world.

ALFIE

All the same age?

SHAYLEE

None over a year old.

ALFIE

Twenty-something infants...
(horrible lightbulb)
What's their exact age?

MACKENNA

You think they're all the same age?

ALFIE

If I'm right. But I really hope I'm wrong.

THOMAS

The three near us are about six months old.

ALFIE

When's their birthday?

THOMAS

Um, hold on...

FETCH

(gets it)
They wouldn't. It's a bastardization of the rite.

ALFIE

I don't think the Old Ones care about dogma anymore.

THOMAS

August 26th. That seems familiar.

MACKENNA

Oh, fuck.

ALFIE

That's the date of the last Reaping.
The one we stopped. They're stealing
kids to replace all the fetches we
saved.

SHAYLEE

And which of the Old Ones has a
penchant for making snacks out of ones
that young?

MUSICAL TRANSITION

139. Nissa's apartment. Tech landscape music.

RILEY

Woo! Okay, that's everybody, present
and accounted for!

NISSA

You're sure?

RILEY

Yup, got official ticket sales numbers
from the environmental sponsor and
figured out the gender breakdown from
the headlining bands' stage photos.
There are 126 eligible bachelors...er,
well, there were. These guys are, like,
thirty years older now. Possibly gross.

NISSA

Possibly. Let's start by filtering the
table.

RILEY

Filtering? So we are looking for
someone in particular.

NISSA

I'm showing you how to.

RILEY

Yeah, but why? What's his story, his
motivation?

NISSA
It's need to know.

RILEY
Yeah, and my unbridled curiosity and
thirst for knowledge need to know.

NISSA
Look, do you know how to filter a pivot
table or not?

RILEY
Uh yeah, I think I got the hang of it?

NISSA
Okay, look for guys who were in their
early twenties to mid-thirties during
the concert.

RILEY
That's one hundred and one. Guess this
appeals to a certain type of guy.

NISSA
They're not local. Filter out anyone
who lived in Wayne County either during
the concert or now.

RILEY
A certain type of guy that isn't
willing to travel. Down to fifteen.

NISSA
How many have brown eyes?

RILEY
Four.

NISSA
Pull up their photos?
(after mouse clicks)
That one.

RILEY
Hello Mister...Bryan with a Y Andersen,
come on down! Looking up socials and
digital footprint--

NISSA

That's alright; I've already got them.

RILEY

You've already...wait, what, how? We just found him!

NISSA

You just found him. I got him an hour ago.

RILEY

Aw, fudge-pops, and you let me doggy-paddle in the digital pool while you've already finished the race?

NISSA

Yup. And what did you learn?

RILEY

Formatting a pivot table for the first time took a good twenty minutes. And I probably could have skipped the magazine and photo head-count and just done an image similarity search to get crowd-sourced photos and pull personal info from there.

NISSA

Could you do it faster next time?

RILEY

Abso-tively posi-lutely!

NISSA

That's how you get experience. Finding what doesn't work, what does, and what can be done faster.

RILEY

Thank you for the lesson, Master.

NISSA

Not done yet. We've got to meet the guy.

RILEY

Already got his most recent address
from his ID!

NISSA

Okay, let me show you how I find
circles for Mack and Shaylee using
satellite data--

RILEY

Wait! We can't go yet!

NISSA

Why not?

RILEY

We don't know anything about the guy!

NISSA

Yeah, and we're going to go find out.

RILEY

No, like...when Shaylee was training
changelings and shit, she would stalk
them ahead of time so she could
integrate into their daily lives for
observation and faux casual meetings.

NISSA

Yeah, that's pretty much what she did
with Mack and the rest of us. But we
don't need to--

RILEY

But Shaylee had Dane do all the
research, so now she doesn't have
anyone!

NISSA

Ahem. Me.

RILEY

Yes, exactly! Teach me how to stalk
people! Digitally!

NISSA

I think the "integrating into their daily lives" bit is more a Shaylee psychology thing.

RILEY

I just need the tools to get the info to give to Shaylee. C'mon, there's got to be more to it than just stealth-friending them on social media. Which I've already done to our mystery man.

NISSA

You already--

RILEY

Yup. Fifty-three, works as a mechanic, profile pic is a selfie where he looks half suspicious at the camera. Typical tech-confused early Gen-Xer. At least he doesn't post any political memes. Wait, I thought you already got his digital tracks...why are you surprised?

NISSA

I just hacked his personal account to see what ads they've programmed based on his searches.

RILEY

Whoa, brilliant!

(beat)

Ew, he's got hemorrhoids.

NISSA

Or he thinks he does. No need to google it if you know you've got it.

RILEY

Maybe I don't want to know anymore about his personal life. Can you show me how to do that satellite thingy instead?

NISSA

Try to think it through on your own. What do you think you need to do first?

RILEY

Hmmm.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

140. Black Annis' bower, after a filling meal.

BLACK ANNIS

(smacks lips)

Not quite aged enough, but Black Annis still finds these ones delicious.

MORGAN

Oh, there's good reason for the stock being a bit young: a delicious irony. But hopefully it's enough that you're not tiffed anymore about being left out of the fun?

BLACK ANNIS

Morgan hunted babes without Black Annis; Morgan staged an attack on the humans without Black Annis--

MORGAN

You could say I brought down the house.

BLACK ANNIS

Morgan has been doing many things without including Black Annis, without telling Black Annis until after it is done. Even if the results do benefit Black Annis, Morgan should seek sisterly advice before being so reckless.

MORGAN

Oh, it all turned out fine. And when the Wild Hunt takes place, none of this will matter, anyway. Might as well enjoy ourselves, hmmm?

(beat)

Until Wodan awakens from his reveries, we have no new orders, no idea what specific plans he wants us to follow. I'm just trying to anticipate what would please him most.

BLACK ANNIS

All the more reason for Morgan to include Black Annis. Black Annis has been at Wodan's side and served him much longer than Morgan.

MORGAN

I'd love for us to create our mischief together, dear sister, but my plans require integration and stealth, and you...well, you're no longer the spring chicken you once were.

BLACK ANNIS

Black Annis is still formidable in the martial and magical arts!

MORGAN

You stick out like a fungal salamander in an eternal love potion.

(beat)

Look, I get it: you've been working for Wodan, from the shadows, for so long that you've let yourself go. Forgotten some self-care. Just let me be the face of the operation, my heart. I can shake things up with some fresh ideas.

BLACK ANNIS

Morgan's ideas are not the way things are done. Morgan is abandoning the old ways.

MORGAN

That's the point of the Wild Hunt, isn't it? To erase the old and restart with the new?

BLACK ANNIS

Morgan thinks Black Annis is "the old" to be forgotten.

MORGAN

Not if you can help it, dear sister. Get with the times, or get left behind.

Stepping sideways departure.

BLACK ANNIS

(huffs)

Morgan is foolish. Black Annis cannot be left behind; Black Annis is important.

141. Wodan stepping sideways arrival.

BLACK ANNIS (CONT'D)

Has this one come to apologize?

WODAN

Not in the slightest.

BLACK ANNIS

Lord Wodan has awoken from his slumber! Forgive Black Annis for thinking you were...

(beat, clears throat)

Black Annis is honored that Wodan visits the bow--

WODAN

Quiet. I do not have time for your prattle.

MIMIR

No, you do not. All that sleep and you are still so tired.

WODAN

What have you done?

BLACK ANNIS

Oh, this? Black Annis was just having a little snack--

WODAN

The stadium! All those humans that are now on high alert weeks before we can begin the Wild Hunt?

BLACK ANNIS

That was not Black Annis. That was Morgan.

WODAN

Your beloved sister whom I returned to
you--

MIMIR

At great personal cost, though somehow
you're even weaker now than then.

WODAN

And yet you just let her run wild,
heedless of any great plan or
preparation.

BLACK ANNIS

That one just wanted to keep active, to
show the halfling and its friends that
we are not wounded--

WODAN

And you, the one I put so much trust in
to bring about my return to power.

MIMIR

Careful now; you won't look so powerful
if you pass out from over-exerting
yourself.

WODAN

And you can't keep one witchling in
check.

BLACK ANNIS

That one doesn't listen to Black Annis!
That one feels superior to the Old
Ones!

WODAN

Robin's failure with his little human
cult, the Master of Shadows
ingratiating the fetch deeper into the
halfling's circle, and now the combined
disappointment of Morgan's
undisciplined schemes and your
lackadaisical attitude towards it all.
Perhaps, it would be better if none of
the Old Ones join me in the Wild Hunt.

BLACK ANNIS

No, please! Wodan is angry now, yes,
but this can be fixed! Black Annis can
fix this! Black Annis will--

WODAN

I do not care how it is done. Take care
of your sister, or this will be the
last revolution of time you see!

MIMIR

Good delegating. But all that yelling
has made you dizzy enough to see
triple. Leave now, while you still have
your dignity.

BLACK ANNIS

Yes, Black Annis thanks Wodan for the
second chance. Black Annis will take
care of--

Wodan stepping sideways departure.

BLACK ANNIS

--everything.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

142. Small town, USA. Nissa and Riley walk empty streets.

RILEY

I didn't know towns like this still
existed.

NISSA

Not everywhere is a big city.

RILEY

No, but this is even smaller than
Conley, which is tiny compared to my
itty-bitty hometown.

NISSA

This is a town where everyone still
knows each other.

RILEY

Do you think that's why Bryan with a Y didn't answer his door? Cuz we're scary lady city-slickers?

NISSA

No one was home.

RILEY

And you think we'll maybe find him if we just walk down Main Street all conspicuous-like?

NISSA

There's no point in waiting around for him on his front porch. Might as well enjoy the quaintness of fly-over country.

RILEY

But there's nothing here! I've been to actual small towns before, but they were all touristy, with horse-drawn buggies and fudge shops on every corner. All the shops are either closed for the day or closed for good.

NISSA

Car still in the driveway, only thing in walking distance is a small town with nothing to do...where do you think he is, Riley?

RILEY

I have no idea.

NISSA

And what do you do when you have no idea?

RILEY

Oh, this is a test! Um, go back to the apartment and use satellites to track him from space?

NISSA

Something you can do from here.
Something simple.

RILEY

Something simple. Something I haven't
done yet. Simple enough...

(beat, then theatrical)

Oh, Google, have I so quickly forsaken
thee?

(pulls out phone)

What do the almighty search engine gods
say to the inquiry of his name?

(beat, then normal)

Oh, fuck.

NISSA

Yup.

RILEY

Nissa, he's...

NISSA

I know. Do you think it's a coincidence
our walk ended up here?

RILEY

They still bury people in cemeteries
this old?

NISSA

That's what his obituary says.

RILEY

And you knew. You knew before we left
that we were too late. Why did we still
come out here?

NISSA

You said you wanted my talents, I said
you needed my experience. This is part
of the experience.

RILEY

I've bugged you to teach me stuff a
gajillion times. Why are you giving me
the hands-on course now?

NISSA

I'm the one the team relies on for detailed recollections, for all things technical. But I can't be that for them forever.

RILEY

You want...

(beat, lightbulb)

you want me to be the next Nissa?

NISSA

You can't be me. I can't give you an eidetic memory, or my snarky attitude. I want you to be Riley.

RILEY

What Riley-ish characteristics are you referring to here?

NISSA

You are a perpetual student. If there's something you don't know, you dive in whole-heartedly and wrestle it until you know it from every angle. I can't teach you everything, but I can give you the tools to figure it out for yourself.

RILEY

...you really do think of me as your protege?

NISSA

You're as annoying as Alfie sometimes, but I know I can trust you to do everything you can to help our friends. There's no one else I would rather pass my white-hat on to.

RILEY

I will wear it with pride and honor.

(beat)

I know it's just a concept, but you don't have an actual hat, right?

NISSA
It's a metaphor.

RILEY
No, yeah, of course. I've never seen
you wear a hat.
(snaps fingers)
I could make my own!

NISSA
It's just a metaphor, Riley.

RILEY
But now I kinda want one. I'll step us
back to Conley and get started.

NISSA
You go ahead. I should pay my respects.

RILEY
To Bryan with a Y? I thought he was
just a training tool. Do you know him?

NISSA
I didn't know him, but...it feels
polite.

RILEY
Oh. Should I come with? I can say nice
things.

NISSA
No, it's fine. Get started on your
headwear search. I'll message you when
I'm ready to head back.

RILEY
Aye-aye, oh Captain, my Captain.

Stepping sideways departure. Nissa walks into the cemetery.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

143. The beach house. Shaylee's phone alerts.

MACKENNA
Another one?

SHAYLEE

No, it's an update. One of the kids was recovered.

THOMAS

That's good news.

ALFIE

That's not possible.

SHAYLEE

Well, it happened, so...

ALFIE

But they did it to mimic the Reaping. Thirty babies all born August 26th. If one got away, that makes twenty-nine.

FETCH

It would be impossible for such a young human to escape on its own.

THOMAS

Could it be a changeling?

FETCH

Fetches are replaced in secret; the changelings would have been swapped before anyone noticed things were amiss.

MACKENNA

So, if the Old Ones just let it go, why? What's the point of kidnapping a bunch of kids and then releasing one?

SHAYLEE

It's a trap.

FETCH

The only ones that they would be looking to snare are us. We would be wise to not take the bait.

THOMAS

It's the only clue we've got. Mackenna, do you think you'd be able to rescue the other kids if you knew where they were?

MACKENNA

If it's who I think it is, then it would be whatever kids are still alive. We've got to try.

SHAYLEE

Oh, it's definitely who you think it is.

FETCH

How are you certain?

SHAYLEE

Well, the kid was found near the cliffs of Dane. And it had blue paint smeared on its forehead.

MACKENNA

C'mon, Shaylee; we're gonna beat that witch until she's black and blue.

FETCH

But she is already--

Stepping sideway departure.

FETCH (CONT'D)

It would make more sense to beat her until she is red. With blood.

ALFIE

Oh, you are getting so close to properly making bad jokes. We'll work on it.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

144. The cemetery. Nissa alone at the headstone.

LEE

Unlike our previous cemetery scenes in this tale, here there is no talking. No friendly observers watching from a distance, no heartfelt graveside confessions. Nissa's the type that talks to her computer, not a marble stone. So she stands. And thinks. And says nothing. Until...

RACHEL

Can I help you?

NISSA

No, sorry, just paying my respects. I'll get out of your way.

RACHEL

Wait, did you know my dad?

NISSA

You're Bryan's daughter? No, I didn't...well, I didn't know him as well as you did. As well as I would have liked. I'm Nissa.

RACHEL

Rachel. Did we meet at the funeral? You look familiar.

NISSA

No, I just found out he passed. I'm sorry for your loss.

RACHEL

Thank you. How did you know my dad?

NISSA

Um, well, let's see...you're about twenty-two? In college?

RACHEL

Twenty-three. I graduated last year and moved back after mom died.

NISSA

You lost both your parents in a year?

RACHEL

Yeah, mom to cancer, dad to a broken heart. He was so lost without her, but it's a comfort that they're together again.

NISSA

They were together a long time, then? High school sweethearts?

RACHEL

No. Why are you asking?

NISSA

Were they together about twenty-nine years ago?

RACHEL

No, they didn't meet until a couple years before I was born. What is this about?

NISSA

Okay, so he didn't...good. That's good.
(beat, then with resolve)
I've never met Bryan, but he's my dad.
And that makes you my half-sister.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

145. Black Annis' bower. Angry stomping echoes as Mackenna storms into the cave.

BLACK ANNIS

The halfling comes.

MACKENNA

(from further away)

Where are you, Annis? Where are the kids?

SHAYLEE

(getting closer)

Mack, if this is a trap, you're not doing us any favors by announcing us.

MACKENNA

(almost there)

She knows we're coming. She wants us to come. So, here we are! What have you got, Betty?

BLACK ANNIS

That is not this one's name.

MACKENNA

Yeah, "this one" doesn't care. Where are the kids?

BLACK ANNIS

In Black Annis's stomach!

MACKENNA

(angry yell)

LEE

Pent up rage from being powerless to stop the attack on the stadium, from being too late to save the children, bubbles over, and Mackenna attacks.

Metal on metal as they fight.

LEE (CONT'D)

Mackenna's scythe may be pure iron, but so are Black Annis's claws. And while age has slowed her reactions to Mackenna's swings and jabs, her eons of experience keep her just out of harm's way.

MACKENNA

Why did you do it? The people, those children! What's Wodan's plan?

Continued fighting.

BLACK ANNIS

Black Annis needn't lift a finger!
T'was her ambitious sister that raised
such a stink! And all of her own
machinations, without a word from Black
Annis or Wodan!

MACKENNA

Don't lie! There has to be a plan! Why
else lead us here? Why release that
child?

BLACK ANNIS

(cackles)

Black Annis was full! Waste not, want
not!

SHAYLEE

You hag!

Shaylee fires her pistol.

LEE

Shaylee's iron musket ball pierces
Black Annis full in the chest, the
force of the hit sending her a few
steps back. It should be the end of the
witch, and our heroes wait for the
inevitable cracking before they run
from the explosion.

BLACK ANNIS

(hiss)

Cruel Shaylee dear! That stings so
fierce!

LEE

Mackenna holds her scythe to Black
Annis' throat, ready to behead her.

MACKENNA

That was iron. Pure iron. Why aren't
you dead?

BLACK ANNIS

Black Annis' claws are made of iron. If she weren't protected, existence with them would be agony. Many of the Old Ones have developed protections.

MACKENNA

Then how do I kill you?

BLACK ANNIS

This one can't!

SHAYLEE

But your sisters can die. They did die. You said you were the last of your kind.

MACKENNA

How? How did your sisters die?

BLACK ANNIS

These ones seek to be witch killers? None have borne that title in generations. None left to train these ones. Their secrets fell from the sky with my sister Mara, and were buried with my sister Morgan. The Castlewellan Forest held her body and the weapon that struck her down. But only one left the grave!

SHAYLEE

Then it should still be there. Whatever killed Morgan.

BLACK ANNIS

These ones better hurry, or the Wild Hunt might kill them before these ones even have a chance!

MACKENNA

What is the Wild Hunt? What's Wodan's plan?

BLACK ANNIS

The Wild Hunt is Wodan's tradition and triumph! Wodan will rid the world of all the unworthy and only his chosen will remain!

SHAYLEE

He's going to end the world.

BLACK ANNIS

Foolish child. Wodan will rule it! Recreated as he sees fit! As he has done since the first cycle of time itself!

MACKENNA

He's done this before. Destroyed everything over and over again. When you said you've seen time repeat, you meant it literally.

BLACK ANNIS

The Younglings thought they could strike down Wodan, stop the Wild Hunt, but they merely delayed the inevitable and brought about their own destruction.

MACKENNA

Anything else we need to know before I separate your head from your shoulders?

BLACK ANNIS

Didn't the halfling want to know where the babes are?

Distant baby cries echoing in the cave.

SHAYLEE

You didn't eat them all?

BLACK ANNIS

Only a few. Black Annis's sin is pride, not gluttony.

(beat)

Winston! Ainsley!

Chittering as the dolls attack.

MACKENNA

Fuck you, Winston. Get off of me!

Screams as Winston poofs.

LEE

Black Annis uses the distraction to get away from Mackenna's intimidating scythe. She's slowed from the gunshot wound, but quick enough to flee to her nearby circle and retreat to fight another day.

Stepping sideways departure. Ainsley poofs.

MACKENNA

I'm following her, she's weak.

SHAYLEE

We don't know how long we have until Morgan comes back, or if Black Annis is going to get her now. We should get the kids and get out of here.

MACKENNA

Fine. Let's find them.

LEE

Mackenna and Shaylee won't be witch killers today. But the day is coming, and soon.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

146. Rachel's house, kitchen. She sets a mug on the table.

RACHEL

Black tea, nothing fancy.

NISSA

Fancier than plain water. Thank you.

Rachel pulls out a chair and sits down. A clock ticks.

RACHEL

So this is...

NISSA

A bit awkward. Probably more than a bit.

RACHEL

I always wanted a sibling, but I expected I would be the older one.

NISSA

I don't want you to think any less of your dad. He never knew I existed, most likely.

RACHEL

He would have wanted to meet you, if he knew. He was that kind of guy.

NISSA

I'm not mad about it. My mom is kind of a free spirit, and they were both young when...well, I don't think either of us want to talk about our parents having sex.

RACHEL

Nope, I can live without that.

NISSA

Same. But some things have come up in my life that have made me question my future. And my past.

RACHEL

You're a bit young for a mid-life crisis.

NISSA

No, I'm definitely not mid-life. I guess I want to let you know why now and not a few months or years ago.

RACHEL

I know you're not trying to cash in or anything. Dad left more debt than inheritance.

NISSA

Do you need any help? It's probably not my place to ask--

RACHEL

I'll be fine, thanks.

(beat)

If you knew dad was dead, and you probably weren't looking for me, why did you come here?

NISSA

Just to say goodbye. I never really thought too hard about what this side of my family would be like. I thought the family I had was enough, but... things have changed. Made me question who I am. Why I am the way I am.

RACHEL

Personally, I attribute character growth more to nurture than nature, but if I can answer any of the questions you do have, I'm happy to help.

NISSA

Were you or your dad...different?

RACHEL

That's kind of vague and a bit ominous.

NISSA

Not like, serial killers or superpowers or anything. Unless...?

(beat)

Um, I have an eidetic memory. I can remember dates, the weather, what I ate and wore, my feelings as clearly as if I were still experiencing the moment they happened. Did you or your dad have anything like that?

RACHEL

No, but that would have been a great trick when I was trying to memorize the Krebs cycle for finals. And dad was lucky if he could remember to pay the bills on time.

NISSA

What about allergies? Maybe he was sensitive to metals, like iron?

RACHEL

Not that I know of. He was always tinkering with things at the car shop or in the garage, so probably not metals.

NISSA

Maybe anyone else on his side? Aunts and uncles, grandparents?

RACHEL

Sorry, dad was an only child, and Paw and Nan passed away about ten years ago.

NISSA

And they weren't special either?

RACHEL

They were to me.

NISSA

Of course, I didn't mean...fuck, that was rude. I'm sorry.

RACHEL

I know what you meant. And the truth is they were ordinary. Same as my dad... our dad. But they were kind. Caring. They took care of me growing up, made sure I studied hard and didn't get into trouble. They were good people. And with everything going on in the world recently, I think being a good person is pretty dang special.

NISSA

I am sorry that I didn't get to know them. Any of them.

RACHEL

I believe we'll all be together again one day. And they'll welcome you as part of the family, if you'd like to be.

NISSA

It's a nice thought.

RACHEL

But, God willing, that day is still a long time away. Until then, I'd love to have the chance to get to know you more.

NISSA

That would be nice. But I'm actually just here for a visit.

RACHEL

Then come back for Christmas. I know it was only two months ago, but we do have one every year. The town is a lot prettier covered in snow, and I make a mean German stollen.

NISSA

(lying)

Yeah. Christmas. I'll be there.

LEE

It's hard to tell the family you just met that your days are numbered, that you won't live to see the next holiday season. It's even harder to say that if you and your friends fail, no one may live to see it.

THE END