

Westcrest

Episode #23: Voodoo as Motivation

“Let me see him!” Sarra pushes roughly past Helena and rattles the door handle.

“Here,” says Helena. She turns the handle gently and pushes the door open.

Jeremy is laying in the centre of the double bed, propped up on pillows. His eyes are ringed with shadows. Chatravati is sitting beside the bed. He studies Sarra as she approaches, but says nothing.

“Jeremy,” says Sarra. He turns his head to the side and smiles at her. It is the saddest smile she has ever seen. “I bought you a new jacket.”

Outside the room Marcus and Helena are listening.

“She was late meeting me,” says Marcus. “And she barely said a word on the way home. Something’s wrong.”

“Are things ever?” Says Helena.

“The symptoms are those of magic... or a curse,” Chatravati tells Sarra. “I don’t yet know the cause, but I will find it.”

He fixes her with that intense look again and Sarra almost tells him about DuPont. Then she sees how frail Jeremy looks laying amid the blankets and decides against it. If she had ever been uncertain about whether or not DuPont was telling the truth, she is now convinced.

“Is there anything I can do?”

“Such maladies usually have a specific source,” said Chatravati. “If we can find the origin of the sickness—and destroy it— Jeremy should recover quickly.”

Sarra thinks of the voodoo doll that DuPont held out before her. Whenever she closes her eyes she sees those needles plunging into the body of the little straw doll. In the bed, Jeremy moans.

Sarra sits with Jeremy for most of the afternoon. He doesn’t say much, but every now and then he reaches down and clutches at his stomach with both hands. “It hurts...” he utters through clenched teeth. Then he says: “I’ve never really *been* sick before.”

Hours pass and Sarra excuses herself. She paces down the corridor. The faster she can return to DuPont, the faster Jeremy will recover. Or at least that’s what she tells herself.

“What’s wrong?” Asks Conor as he bumps into her and notices the discouraged look on her face.

“Nothing,” Sarra says absently. She pushes past him and heads downstairs. Thankfully she doesn’t encounter anyone else as she crosses the main foyer and heads down a second set of stairs that will lead her into the garage. Beyond the garage is the vault—where hundreds of magical artifacts are kept in locked boxes.

Sarra hasn’t even stopped to think about what DuPont needs the maraca for. Maybe he just wants to start a band. All Sarra knows for certain is that Conor is visiting Jeremy right now, so he won’t be watching the security monitors; and that’s all the opportunity she needs.

She crosses the garage and enters a narrow corridor lit by above with fluroscent lights. She opens the door to the vault and enters the room, turning her head from side to side to inspect the labels on the boxes.

The box she is looking for is located beside the door. Sarra drags it forward on the shelf, noticing that it is sealed with a heavy lock. She closes her eyes and visualises energy coursing through her veins. Her hands tingle as she reaches for the front of the box.

A brilliant burst of light sends the lock spinning across the floor. The side of the box is scorched but the rest remains intact. Sarra desperately claws the box open.

Resting at the bottom of the box is a wooden maraca engraved with the face of a fanged demon. She tucks the musical instrument into one of the padded gloves at her belt. Her heart races as she kneels to pick up the lock from the floor. It has warped out of shape so she tosses it inside the box and pushes it back on the shelf.

The vault door whispers closed behind her. She heads back into the garage and straddles the conveyance. Hoping that Marcus will forgive her, she thumbs the ignition switch and pulls back on the throttle.

“Sorry,” she says to the empty garage. Then she shoots off down the exit pipe and out into Lake Freyja.