

Prelude to Death: part 2

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The second part on my series based around Marienburg, which ironically, haven't happened in Marienburg yet.

This story doesn't have as much action as the first one, though it has more detail to it and is a vital part of the story.

Death's Time: part 2

After what seemed an eternity for Maya, she felt strong hands from above grabbing her shoulder, lifting her up.

"You ok?" Rickard asked her, smiling his so innocent looking smile, something which probably had been the last sight of many people before. Through the dense rain she could make out the shapes of her partners standing there, waiting for her. The mud had smeared her coat, and her pockets were full of mud, but luckily, even though the rain was pouring on them her guns were dry, though if she would slip now for mishap and fall again she doubted she'd be as lucky. "Yeah, I'm fine Rick, thanks." Maya said, with a slight hint of dismissal in her voice. As she walked past him, her feet plunged deep into the mud, not caring the slightest if he felt offended, after what had been happening the past days she frankly didn't care if any of them felt insulted, she just wanted to do this last thing to get her payment and be off home, off to Lana "Lana" Maya thought, and realized how much she missed her, that fragile pale face, that innocent look, the smell of her auburn hair, the special smile her daughter reserved only for her. "No" She said to herself, she couldn't think of her now, it always made it harder for her to do her job when she thought of her daughter. Maya found it silly, really, how she usually had no moral issues in killing a man but always taught her daughter otherwise, but as her father had once said "Do as I tell you, not as I do".

She lifted her head up, barely making out the shapes of the others; it made her nervous to have such low visibility, "Who the hell decided it was okay to leave in this weather? If any of us gets lost is gonna be a bloody long time till we find the road again", Maya thought while looking down at the muddy path which seemed to reveal what was left of a road beneath "not that there is much to follow anyway" she remarked to herself. Humor was said to be a good thing while marching in horrible weather, but Maya was unable to recall any jokes at the moment, and she could only wonder how the others were going on with the horrible trek.

Her foot plunged into a knee high hole in the mud, one of the many dangers of walking in the dark, luckily Maya wasn't riding a horse, if she had, then her neck would probably no longer be properly attached to her head, to make matters worse they wouldn't be able to have any light -not that they could carry a torch in the first place since the rain would extinguish any flame. She didn't think that Clark, their fearsome leader, would bother with the thickening darkness, especially since he was so greedy that forcing him to take some coins out of his purse would be like trying to lure a Bretonnian away from his horse: you have more chances of dying than succeeding or if you would succeed, you'd just find out that it wasn't really worth the trouble. In any case torches were out of the question, she concluded.

Maya kept on walking, focusing her eyes on the road below that, while at the same time trying not to lose her partners. Suddenly it seemed that one of them had disappeared from her sight and as she straightened up to search for him, the ground seemed to slide beneath her and once again she was thrown hard against the muddy ground. She

This time she rose up by herself, not nearly as buried into the mud as she had been the first time, but at least twice as frustrated, which only increased when she put her hand back to check for her rifle. To her horror she discovered that the gunpowder and bullet bag she kept had fell somewhere in the mud, which, in these conditions meant it was lost forever. Her colleagues ahead of her stopped, and wondered what the fuss was all about and why Maya was screaming, apparently with frustration. Amidst the pouring of rain they could make out a sentence "WHAT ELSE CAN GO WRONG YOU BASTARD?!" was as much as they could make out, besides Maya's shape in the mud getting up and waving a fist at the skies. Some of them sighed, other smiled, and after one or two minutes for her to regain her dignity they moved on, everyone sensing their objective was near.

Suddenly, as quickly as it had arrived, the storm was gone, the rain lessening bit by bit until it was no more of a light drizzle, and the clouds above parted to reveal a full moon, smiling upon them as her light, as if holy shone upon the few rocks that made up the once great road, and some hundreds of feet ahead they could see the end of the road and the place they were headed for.

Lorenz's head looked back to Maya and smiled, "You HAVE to teach me how to do that, every time I ask for a god damn thing nobody up there ever listens" and swiftly as ever Maria punched his shoulder, "Of course not, you're a man, what did you expect?" she said. "Oh, she got you there!" Marvin remarked, with Rickard besides him laughing and making the

usual rude comments. "Quiet!" came Clark's voice, like a force it pressured the others into submission, he wasn't that big of a man, and didn't look particularly mean either, but there was always a certain sense of leadership around him that made him great, and others lesser. "The cottage you see up ahead is where we were told the client would come, now quit behaving like girls and quicken the pace, we don't know if they're there already" His orders rang, and they all jumped into action. "But hey, why do you always remark on them behaving like girls? I mean, boys behave just like..." but Maria was cut short from a look the Captain threw back at them, a look that had sentenced many men to death and in its smoother meaning meant "SHUT THE HELL UP!" and she remarked in a whisper to Maya "wonder what's got into him today...", which was something Maya herself wondered, but dismissed it to the obvious payday reason. Although the proximity to the woods could also be a reason for stress she thought to herself, as she looked to her left to the dark woods, but as hard as she tried it was impossible to look beyond a dozen feet into the forest itself, as the dense trees and vegetation were dark themselves, and in abundance.

They quickly covered the few hundred yards left for the cottage, and soon enough they were banging at its door, Rick and Lorenz quickly checked around the cottage for signs of any living person, and the window, though dusty was clear enough to reveal nobody was inside in the one room only hovel. "Well, I can always pick the lock if you would, I'd just need some metal pieces and patience, although I think Lorenz has..." Maya was suggesting, unnecessarily as Rickard busted the door open in one powerful kick. "Or we could do that" Marv replied, which earned him a snort from Maria and a look from Clark. The only room in the makeshift house was big enough for a dozen people, and had a wooden table on the middle, which several chairs around the room, no specific organization. Marvin and Rick quickly chose the most comfortable seats and settled themselves down, "Well, where are they?" was Lorenz's question as he walked up to the other end of the room, putting his gun on the table, action which Maya also did, and decided to take the spare time to clean her gun, it wasn't much use anyway without ammo, so it might as well be clean. "They're probably still coming; you know how the trip in the Reik can take some hours". Was Clark's response as he too settled down on a chair facing the opposite wall to the door, "So what do we do?" Marv asked as he proceeded to clean his knife in the disturbing manner Maya had already grown used to. "We wait." The captain answered, and they all sat down, with Maya sitting in a chair facing the window, for some reason seeing the forest made her feel safe.

Minutes passed, minutes turned into hours, and hours turned into boredom, and middle of the night, while half of them were asleep and the other half were playing cards in the table Marvin walked up and asked "Hey, you got the watch I gave you for safekeeping?" She blinked, until she remembered the occasion of which he spoke. "Oh, right, here it is" she said, taking the clock out of the pocket and handing it to him. "Thanks" he said smiling, and walked away to the captain and Maria who were busy betting. Many minutes passed as she looked out the window and noticed the most curious thing, how it seemed that the tops of the trees were moving, though she couldn't hear the wind, even though the cottage was full of cracks, which would have normally allowed the wind to make its usual whistling noise. As she was about to comment on that Marvin walked up to her again, this time clearly in frustration, as if impatient about something, and abandoning all his former politeness he pointed to his watch and asked "What the hell is this??" to which she casually remarked "Why, it's your clock..." "Yes, I know it's my bloody clock but why aren't the pointers moving??" he asked, with a rising tone of voice. "Hmm... must have been the mud, don't worry, I know how important this clock is to you, and I promise I'll pay you the repair costs." And strangely enough, his eyes went from anger to some other emotion "No, you don't understand..." and in the middle of this sentence Maya caught definite movement in the trees outside, she looked more closely as did Maria who also seemed to notice it, saying "Hey, Clark you see the..." until suddenly, a very familiar light flared in the darkness of the forest. "GET DOW-....!!!" Were the attempted words from her as several pounds of metal burst through the cottage and hell broke loose.

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