
THE TOWER

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It was morning, that is usual and inevitable. Things were very silent as Randolph slept in his bed all safe and warm, he was totally oblivious to the dangerous creature circling his bed. Fangs and long silky black hair, slowly the cursed horror known as Clara Gordon had slipped into his room and was looming over him.

Perhaps the description of her slipping into the room is a bit strong. What really happened was more like this, Clara Gordon noticed Randolph left his door unlocked so she opened the door and slid into the room. Once in the room she had a notion that she must do something useful, why else would she be in the room.

So as the saying goes- "old habits die hard", Clara Gordon found herself opening the curtains to let the morning sun in, this was how she use to wake people up in her own home long long ago. And while Clara Gordon thought this was a good idea, Randolph had a different thought on the subject. Squinting heavily, Randolph sat up in bed. "Must you do that?"

"Do what?" Clara Gordon turned to face him.

"Do what? Open the curtains, that's what!" said Randolph. "Isn't sun light something you avoid, you are ...well you know." Randolph flopped back down and rolled over.

"Oh no, I'm not that sort. I love the sun. Anyway, it's the best method to wake you up. It's mid-morning and you can't spend the whole day in a darkened room." Clara Gordon said over her shoulder, she had returned to face the sunny window.

“Ok, I'm up” Randolph sat on the side of his bed.
“Where's Jo by the way, I seem to recall her stumbling into the den.”
“She was asleep in there, until I opened the curtains.” Clara Gordon said on her way out.

Jo wandered down the stairs yawning and trying to wake up. She stretched and yawned and basically stumbled her way to the foot of the stairs. The den had been her place of drunken slumber until someone opened the curtains, flooding the whole room with bright white light. This had Awoken Jo who had then stumbled upstairs for a shower and a change of clothing.

She now found herself fully dressed, washed and at the foot of the stairs. What lay ahead of her was anyone's guess. The universe had a habit; actually, it was Randolph's fault now that she thought about it. That didn't matter, it was now the start of a new day and the possibilities that lay ahead where endless.

Jo was now officially an adult. She had this status thrust on her by means of her recent Birthday, she turned 21. According to all the laws of the universe, or at least the laws of her household she was all grown up. It was a mafia thing, or at least that's how she looked at it.

Her father had no sons, only Jo. So she did everything she could to make her father proud of her. She'd even join the family, if she was allowed to, but it was men only club. So, she lived the life

as much as she could, more or less. Actually less, she tried to pass herself off as someone in that life, but she wasn't that sort of person. She followed the law, was kind to animals and helped others and generally was a good person.

Any normal person would have been proud to have her as a daughter. But she wasn't part of a normal life. Honor and money were all that mattered, well mostly money, everything else was a distant second to money. Honor was lip service and Jo knew this, but she wasn't saying nothing to nobody about it.

All this was going round and round in her head until she walked into Randolph that morning. "Ya know" Jo started. "I've been thinking things over and maybe it's time to return and finish up my degree at school."

"Well Jo. You're 21 now, you can do as you like." Half joked Randolph.

"Yeah. I'm all grown up now huh." Jo replied.

"Anyway, I only work for the summer. For some reason Dad said I had to finish school, no jobs or nothing."

"Well I wouldn't worry to much about that."

Randolph walked over to the breakfast table in the kitchen. "You're on your own now. Your 21 now, beyond parental input. Your free to leave, but you should know Clara and myself are just heading out for a quick vacation." Randolph motioned towards Clara Gordon.

“Vacation! Count me in, school can wait!” Jo sounded excited.

“That's the spirit!” said Randolph. Before anyone (Jo) had time to think about the three were out the door, down the driveway, onto the sidewalk and then...

“And here we are!” Randolph held his hands up.

Jo looked around and frowned. “Ya know, I saw film of the civil war in Lebanon on the nightly news. But this place really has it beat”

The city was a bombed-out wreck of its former self. What was once a thriving metropolis was now a sad backdrop for a war movie.

“Yes, I know!” said Randolph. He looked around a bit also. “Well it wasn't like this the last time I was here.”

“Well it's like this now!” Shouted Jo. She pointed for good measure. “Is this really the best you can do?”

“I'm sure well find somebody alive, perhaps they can explain what happened.” said Randolph.

“This looks nice.” said Clara Gordon. “Think of all the fun we can have!” She looked from side to side, a pair of sunglasses lowered on the bridge of her nose.

This took both Randolph and Jo a bit by surprise. It was generally though Clara Gordon wasn't this enthusiastic- about anything.

Randolph spent the better part of half a minute studying Clara Gordon's new attire.

“Clara,” he started “when did you start wearing sunglasses?”

“What sunglasses?” Clara Gordon answered Slyly. She pushed the sunglasses back up the bridge of her nose.

“Don't be coy with me!” Randolph pointed to the sunglasses Clara Gordon was hiding her eyes behind.

“Oh.” Clara Gordon answered faking surprise. “These sunglasses.” she lowered the sunglasses down the ridge of her nose. “I've always worn sunglasses.” she answered.

“Oh.. and that olive drab jump suit you had on..” Randolph trailed off toward the end as he talked.

“That old thing. That's what they have you wear in Limbo, it's not fashionable, but it's functional. I found this in a closet back at your place.” Clara Gordon showed off her new outfit. It was a dark red crushed velvet jacket over a frilly dress shirt. Between her hair, sunglasses, fangs, deep red crushed velvet jacket and frilly dress shirt, she had

the overall air of a goth preppy.

“You've been feeding, haven't you?” asked Randolph in a serious voice.

“Yeah, some guy in some bar somewhere- he'll have a headache when he wakes up, but I didn't pass anything on. He'll have a rough couple of days, that's all.”

The three made their way deeper into the city. Eventually they came to stand in front of what had been a beautiful garden. Now it was a burnt-out char of what it had once been.

Randolph looked around, he turn his head from left to right and then back again. With a heavy sigh he spun around to face Jo.

“Perhaps your right.” he said. “There doesn't seem to be anyone around.”

“Well...” Jo started, she looked left to right surveying the garden. “It's certainly not looking to good.”

Clara Gordon step forward and lowered her sunglasses. She had remained mostly quiet for as the group had walked through the bombed out remains of he city. “No, someone is about. Look.” she said pointing off to some far distant structure.

Randolph turned to look where Clara Gordon pointed. “Your eyes are better than my own Clara. What is it you see?”

“A tower with a light a top it.” Answered Clara Gordon. “Not a fancy tower like I live in. This one is crude and square, but I can just make out a small light atop it.”

“We should make our way there. If there's a light, chances are someone has kept the light on for a reason.” With that Randolph headed towards the tower, or at least where the tower was suppose to be.

Clara Gordon and Jo followed close behind. Clara Gordon took Jo by the arm and to walked a while that way.

“Jo, we have come some way together” Clara Gordon started. “Now we are friends yeah.”

Jo almost tripped over herself. Clara Gordon wasn't like this- or hadn't been like this. “I think I heard Randolph call for me.” Jo said

“No you didn't” replied Clara Gordon.

“Yeah, I'm pretty sure I did.” with that Jo pulled herself free of Clara Gordon and ran up beside Randolph.

As they walked the scenery changed little. What structures remained were burned out husk. Piles of rubble also marked the location of what had once been. The silence of the city was almost deafening, save for the occasional gust of hot wind rustling

through the piles of rubble and over the dry and dusty streets.

It was overcast and gray, like a winter's day. Neither rain nor snow would fall, only a sea of gray clouds with dark highlights hanging low. There was no sign of movement in the sky, nothing to blow away the clouds, only stillness.

The small group eventually came to the foot of a high tower, crude, made of stone. The Tower was not a lighthouse originally. A single light was illuminated and shown through the windows of the top floor.

“Well,” said Randolph. “it looks as if this is the place!”

“It's a light house!” Jo exclaimed.

“No, I don't think so.” Randolph looked up at the light coming from the top. “Light houses are for signaling danger, not for drawing a crowd.”

“The light house at Alexandria was!” Jo stated. “It was used to safely guide ships into the harbor. Ships could see the light out at sea and then they would come into the harbor.”

“It was? Since when.” said Randolph.

“Well, ladies first.” Randolph motioned toward the door at the base of the tower.

“So much for chivalry.” said Clara Gordon as she followed Jo into the tower.

Inside was dark at first, but as ones eyes grew use to the light details came alive. Besides the stairs there were strange symbols etched into the walls. Jo looked up towards the top level, the stairs wound round and round above her.
“Gee, that's kinda up there!” Jo said with a nervous giggle.

“Don't worry about it” said Clara Gordon.
“Randolph and I will be behind you.”
“Great... right behind?” asked Jo while she started up the stairs.
“That depends on how fast you are.” answered Clara Gordon.

The term 'spiral stairway' only applies in the most open loose terms possible. The Stairs followed the outer wall and formed a loose spiral in that they wrapped around and around as they ran up the inside of the tower. Small windows were present every floor or so. The windows were the only illumination for the stairs. So as one passed a window there was no source of light till the next little window appeared some ways above.

“It's very dark between windows.” Said Jo.
“It's never too dark.” Came Clara Gordon's voice from behind.

As she climbed the stairs up the tower, Jo wondered what purpose such a tower had. It's not as if the sea was nearby. And what little view the windows afforded hardly made the tower worthwhile. There could be no purpose for the tower as far as Jo thought, unless the tower had at one time been part of a larger structure.

Jo being first in order, came to a door. Here the stairs stopped, in or turn around. She would have to ask Clara Gordon and Randolph to go back down the stairs and that was not likely to happen. Being that only one option realistically presented itself, Jo reached out and pushed open the door.

“Why did you stop?” Came an inquiry from Clara Gordon.

Jo let out an audible sigh. “There was a stupid door!” she yelled back.

“No reason to be rude. You know how a door works.” Clara Gordon answered.

“Why have we stopped?” Came Randolph voice from behind Clara Gordon.

“There was a door!” shouted Jo in reply.

“Some sort of door blocked the path.” Clara Gordon said with a quick point.

“Well Jo should open it and go through and tell her to stop being rude.” Randolph said.

“I am..Geezze you guys!” Jo shouted, she then stepped through the doorway and into the room. As she did this she muttered under her breath “Driving me nuts here.”

The room at the top of the steps was not what Jo had been expecting. It was small and empty. There was furniture in the room, but nothing amazing. Bed, Dresser, Wooden Card table and a mirror hanging on the wall opposite the entrance. The bed was to the side so when entering the room one could see them self in the mirror as well as the bed. On the wooden card table there was a candle burning in a candle stick holder. That had been the source of light which shone from the tower.

“It's empty.” Observed Clara Gordon on entering. “Bit of a letdown...” Randolph voice came from behind Clara Gordon.

As Randolph entered, he gently pushed Clara Gordon a side. “Do we know the source of the light?”

“That.” Jo motioned towards the Candle and holder resting on the wooden card table.

Randolph looked about the room fairly quickly, it was a small room and there was hardly anything to see. “Someone’s been here recently.”

“How can you tell?” asked Jo.

“Well someone lit the candle; they don't burn forever you know.” With that Randolph turned and started to make his way down the stairs. “Come on” he shouted over his shoulder.

The three of them assembled outside the bottom of the tower.

A single thought had run through Jo's mind while she made her way down the stairs. How odd that someone should bother to leave the candle burning in the tower. Who was this person anyways? If it had been Jo she would have left this city and made her way to a different city.

“You know...” Jo started as the three walked along. “This city looks pretty empty, why would someone stick around here?”

“Well if your born and raised here, where else would you go.” answered Randolph.

Clara Gordon injected herself in the conversation.

“Jo, home means a lot to people. Even a ruined one like this.”

The Trio walked in silence along the wind-swept streets.

“It's weird to think of it now but I felt as if someone was in that tower watching me.” Jo said.

“Oh, I have that effect on some people” said Clara Gordon.

“No, it was different. I know what it's like when you're watching me sorta predator and prey. This was something else, something different.” Jo answered.

“We were all their and no one else has spoken up, nether Clara Gordon or Myself felt anything unusual.” said Randolph.

“Yes but Clara Gordon is, well, you know.” Spoke Jo.

“Whatever state she's in has very little to do with how she feels.” started Randolph. He quickly turned to observe Clara Gordon. “Besides, one should do well to keep an eye on Clara...”

After some time, the ruins of the city started to fall away. The group was leaving the urban sprawl of the city behind. What lay ahead was a great open plain of nothingness, an empty horizon.

“Well I wouldn't stay there, that's for sure.” Jo said. “The city was empty, there's no food, no water and no life.”

Randolph spoke “Oh you didn't see it?”

“See what?” Jo answered.

“That garden we came to. There was a rose bush, it was just about to bloom. Life always returns.” said Randolph.

With that the small group of travelers left.