*Please be advised the content of this podcast includes driving sound effects, violence, firearms and gunshots, blood, smoking, alcohol, death, and mentions of suicide. We also swear… a whole lot… so… please listen at your own discretion.*

***Previously on Desperado…***

*Now rescued from the Vault, Elio was on the slow path to recovery, Shinji revealed his true name to Asher, and Talia decided to confront Samedi once and for all. Summoning him with only a lit cigarette for offering.*

***This… is Desperado…***

***SFX: Eerie, almost ethereal transitional music.***

***SFX: cigarette drags***

**BARON SAMEDI**

It ain’t much indeed… (exhales) But spit on the appetizer, and you won’t get dinner… (*chuckle*) What else is on the table, Lady Talia?

**TALIA**

(*Interrupting*)

These fucking hands if you keep talking!

**BARON SAMEDI**

...

**TALIA**

She called you a *God*! A *protector*- She prayed to you every day, she trusted you with *me*!

**BARON SAMEDI**

Oh no...

**TALIA**

And look at what you’ve done!

**BARON SAMEDI**

No, no, no that won’t do at all...

**TALIA**

*Look at me!*

**BARON SAMEDI**

I think you’ll have to kneel.

**TALIA**

What?

**BARON SAMEDI**

Kneel, *daughter*, and we’ll forget about this.

**TALIA**

You... *foolish, arrogant*-

**BARON SAMEDI**

I’ll give you one chance-

**TALIA**

- forgotten *old man*-

**BARON SAMEDI**

- because I can’t expect you to understand-

**TALIA**

The grand *fucking* Samedi, held in chains by-

**BARON SAMEDI**

*(voice echoing menacingly)*

*WHAT RESPECT MEANS!* When you were raised in the jungle like a beast! Who kept your heart beating? Who called the air back to your lungs - and WHO brought you back on those two feet that you have the *audacity* to stand on today - I SAID KNEEL!

***SFX: sizzling and burning***

**TALIA**

Samedi writhed in pain as the Henna clawed at his power.

**BARON SAMEDI**

(*pained grunt*)

And go... wash that *filth* off of your skin! How many have died uttering my name, for you to spit on their sacrifice! You heard our people scream, you heard them make call for me AND YOU PUT ME IN SHACKLES!

**TALIA**

*Your people*. (*A beat.*) You’re not the one grandmother prayed to, are you? You dress like him, sound like him... But your heart left the island a long time ago.

**BARON SAMEDI**

My heart is where my people are.

**TALIA**

And what do they tell you down in Louisiana? Did the singing get to your head? Is that why you don’t need to hear me? See me? Why you think you can just *use me*?!

**BARON SAMEDI**

They pray for their children. The dead and the living, the ones losing blood and the ones loosing faith! While you sell yourself on a stage for the Devil herself!

**TALIA**

...The devil?

*He laughed at my face, and slapped his thighs like I had just told him the funniest, most tragic of thing.*

**BARON SAMEDI**

(*The baron laughs.*)

Tell me little girl, how much power would we need you and I, to single- handedly protect an entire circus. From gods and spirits, inquisitors, witches -from inspectors and accountants who should have figured out by now that a show like Nova can’t possibly bring a profit! In whose hands did you put your safety, Talia?! Who put you on that stage?

**TALIA**

They saved my life!

**BARON SAMEDI**

Then why can’t you TRUST ME?! (*A beat.*) Did I not do the same?

**TALIA**

You didn’t do it for me.

**BARON SAMEDI**

And why did you? You and your grandmother, what did you pray for? A God? Or just a weapon?

(*Samedi laughs*.)

Here’s the root you keep tripping on, Talia. I know what lies in the jungle back home, I know about the claws and fangs even the Old Man did not challenge. You were raised among spirits- but you’re *not* in the jungle anymore. I’m *not* something to be tamed, I’m your legacy.

**TALIA**

I don’t care for a legacy, if it wants me to kneel.

**BARON SAMEDI**

Child please, we’ll see where that talk will be next week.

**TALIA**

There won’t be a next week. I’m not ready Baron. I told you the first time we met. *This* isn’t me.

*He frowned and opened his mouth to speak, but I didn’t want to hear anything else. The conversation had completely escaped me. I closed my eyes and severed the connection, burying the voice of Samedi under the sound of my heartbeat.*

*Malik used to tell me one way to anchor your mind to reality was through the body. Focus on a thumping heart, a drop of sweat or an open wound, and you’d always find your way back. So that’s what I did. And when I opened my eyes again… I was all alone in the apartment.*

**ELIO**

*(whistles)*

You two have… issues.

**TALIA**

... I get tired just talking about that night.

**ELIO**

Same, same-same-same.

**SHINJI**

Honestly, we can’t have anything nice. Like, how does a night out turn into-

**ELIO**

*(interrupting)*

Shinji, if you don’t shut the fuck up.

**TALIA**

Who is we?!

**ELIO**

*(talking over)*

Yeah who the fuck is we?

**SHINJI**

I nearly had a panic attack, broke two of my ribs, got - tranquilized! And-

**ELIO**

And you woke up in an actual bed, so...?

**TALIA**

He had weighted blanket, like- I got jack shit. Do you remember the part where I woke up *in hospital*?

**SHINJI**

Look, it sucks to suck. Next time don’t get caught.

*(Elio burst out laughing)*

**TALIA**

I hate you so fucking much it’s unreal.

**ELIO**

*(laughing, still)*

I mean- technically-

**TALIA**

No no he’s right, he’s fully right. I just hate the bitch.

**SHINJI**

*(with a shrug)*

Just don’t.

**TALIA**

Just- (*chuckles*) Yeah my bad, we’ll try that next time.

**ELIO**

Just don’t break your ribs.

**TALIA**

Hey- just don’t hit on a goddamn Warlock how about that?

**SHINJI**

Have you *seen* Asher?

**TALIA**

Trash, absolute trash...

**ELIO**

*(talking over)*

Y’know… Boys will be boys.

**TALIA**

Boys will be fucking dead if you keep saying that.

***SFX: DJ’s airhorn goes off***

*(the boys continue chuckling)*

**ELIO**

Is that- Where did you get a sound board?!

**TALIA**

It was just laying around.

**TALIA**

Okay... Okay...

**ELIO**

Should we try and reel it back?

**TALIA**

Gimme a minute- *(Talia tries to gather herself.)*

**ELIO**

So Talia was having a go at Samedi, I was with Samar… Shinji, what were you up to?

**SHINJI**

*I spent the night with Asher, then received a call from Marcus early in the morning. He -*

**TALIA**

Hold up-

**ELIO**

Yeah, wait-wait-wait.

**TALIA**

It’s all we’re going to get? “Spent the night?”

**SHINJI**

I’ll get to that, okay… if you’d just let me?

**ELIO**

Mkay. Sure.

**TALIA**

Go ahead.

**SHINJI**

*So I receive a call, and I’m told to get to a hideout instead of returning to Nova. Those three days you spent in and out of consciousness with Samar, Talia and I spent them being moved around-*

**TALIA**

Separately.

**SHINJI**

*Yeah, yeah, we weren’t together, I think the initial idea was to get me out of the country but I insisted. I said I needed to find you guys so… three days later they just dropped me off 10 minutes away from your location-*

**ELIO**

My location, right?

**SHINJI**

Yeah. They gave me a backpack and the address, and that was all.

**TALIA**

Yeah, same here.

**SHINJI**

I had to walk the rest of the way- which is always so frustrating-

**ELIO**

Oh, is it because you can fly?

**TALIA**

Oh my god Shinji can fly?

**ELIO**

Yeah, I think he might have wings or something.

**TALIA**

*(Gasp; to shinji)*

You do?

**SHINJI**

*(sighs)*

Are you done?

**ELIO**

Yeah.

**TALIA**

Yeah go ahead.

**SHINJI**

*I knocked on the door and Samar opened. She was quieter than usual, and it felt weird. I expected her to y’know like… make a joke or a dig but… nothing like that.*

*I don’t know- without her cheery attitude there’s nothing to - sort of downplay, the scars on her body. You know, she’s got tribal tattoos, the controlled breathing- and on some level, you always get creeped out when you realize she doesn’t make a single sound when she walks. It’s like those people with pet lions - Like… maybe you shouldn’t sit so close to a killing machine, y’know? Does that make any sense?*

**TALIA**

Yeah, yeah I feel you.

**ELIO**

Kinda.

**SHINJI**

*Well… I asked about you Elio, and when she led me to your room. You were so still... I almost went to check your pulse, but Samar said we should leave you alone and let you rest. She sat me down in the kitchen, at a white plastic table, under the cold light bulb hanging from the ceiling. It took her a while to bring me up to speed, but eventually we just kind of sat there in silence taking it all in.*

***SFX: storm brews away outside the window***

**SAMAR**

Anything to drink?

**SHINJI**

No, no. I- I’m alright. Thank you.

**SAMAR**

And you?

**SHINJI**

What?

**SAMAR**

How have you been? You look like a raccoon.

**SHINJI**

Is it the bags under my eyes or just… general racism?

**SAMAR**

I don’t know but that’s a deflection.

**SHINJI**

You don’t know if it’s racism or not?

**SAMAR**

Shinji.

(*A beat.*)

**SHINJI**

…I can’t complain. I didn’t really sleep much.

**SAMAR**

Mh.

**SHINJI**

Samar… when do you think he’ll wake up?

**SAMAR**

He did already, couple times. But once he recovers we can’t leave him alone.

**SHINJI**

What do you mean?

**SAMAR**

It’s hard to be on your own once you’ve had what he had. Build yourself back up knowing how the world can just... (*beat*) It’s… it’s hard.

**SHINJI**

Right, so… he’s essentially just on suicide watch then.

**SAMAR**

Pretty much, yeah.

**SHINJI**

... I should’ve been there.

**SAMAR**

Oh, absolutely not. That would’ve been a disaster.

**SHINJI**

*I looked up. Samar kept her eyes on me, as she tapped the ash off her cigarette. I didn’t have time to reply.*

***SFX: door knock***

*Samar checked something on her phone, then got up to open the door.*

**TALIA**

*...And she rushed me inside. I fell into her arms without hiding my relief and… That woman is strong. I don’t know why it struck me then, but without Samedi’s powers… Damn.*

**SAMAR**

How’s the henna holding up?

**TALIA**

Better than expected - Shinji!

**SHINJI**

Hey-

***SFX: they hug***

**TALIA**

I can’t believe I got you into this.

**SHINJI**

You wish you could get rid of me.

**TALIA**

Where is he?

**SAMAR**

Resting. Come, I’ll make some tea.

**TALIA**

Can I see him?

**SAMAR**

When he’s recovered.

**TALIA**

Please, I just want to-

**SAMAR**

(*interrupting*)

Sweetie. You’re barely keeping it together and I can’t deal with… any more. He’s not good, but he’s alive. Save yourself the image.

**SHINJI**

Umm… sorry. Where’s the kettle?

**SAMAR**

Behind you.

**SHINJI**

Right. Thank you.

**SAMAR**

Thank you. Bring yourself a chair Talia.

**TALIA**

...Okay.

***SFX: chair pulls out***

**SAMAR**

We’ll try to locate Catrina. But we’ll have to lay low until Elio recovers.

**SHINJI**

And… how do we do that?

**SAMAR**

You. Our descriptions are up everywhere, but they have no idea who *you* are. I’ll ask Basim to alter the uniform we stole from-

**SHINJI**

I can’t.

(*A beat.*)

**SAMAR**

Are you sure?

**SHINJI**

Certain.

**SAMAR**

(swear)... Fine, I forget you’re just a few months old- okay-

**TALIA**

Why can’t we send him?

*And- I’ll never forget this- Shinji was just by the kitchen counter when I said that, back towards us-*

**SHINJI**

*Pouring water from the kettle.*

**TALIA**

*Yeah… and when I tell you I* ***blinked****- and suddenly his wings were all over me.*

***SFX: Wings deploy, whoosh of air***

**ELIO**

*(gasp)*

Ah, no!

**TALIA**

*Elio, I blinked- They had torn through his shirt and their fucking razor blades were hovering juust above my skin. I felt one of them right next to my throat, and still without turning around, I hear him say:*

**SHINJI**

Jugular.

**TALIA**

*Then right under my shoulder blades:*

**SHINJI**

Heart.

**TALIA**

*My wrists.*

**SHINJI**

Ulnar, and Radial.

**TALIA**

*Then lower, to my outer thigh.*

**SHINJI**

And if I dig right through that, I’ll find the femoral. You’d bleed out in less than a minute. I can’t tell you how I know that, but I do.

**SAMAR**

And that’s why we’re not sending death itself down there.

**SHINJI**

If I start to panic and the spirit takes control... I… can’t fight. I just... kill. That’s… all I know.

**TALIA**

You could have just said that, you psycho...

**SHINJI**

Yeah, well. People tend to be skeptical when the skinny guy acts all tough. Would you like a cup of tea?

**TALIA**

Thanks.

**SHINJI**

Do you take milk or sugar?

**TALIA**

Xanax, if you have any.

**SHINJI**

If I did I wouldn’t share.

**TALIA**

Damn we have a LOT in common.

**SHINJI**

Yeah, well, it’s probably the trauma.

(A beat.)

**TALIA**

... Let me just drink that tea.

**SHINJI**

Samar? You’ve been quiet.

**SAMAR**

... We… are gonna stalk a witch.

*(A beat.)*

**TALIA**

(*done*)

Okay.

**SAMAR**

Get some intel, get the crystal, get out of this country.

**TALIA**

And just… any witch?

**SAMAR**

As long as they’re stationed in London, meaning they work for Joan.

***SFX: Footsteps, door opens***

**ELIO**

What about the inquisitor?

**SHINJI**

Elio!

**ELIO**

Hey. Talia you look like you’ve seen a ghost-

***SFX: another hug***

Oof!

**TALIA**

Oh my god you’re okay. Thank you. Thank you. I’m so sorry.

**ELIO**

Are you okay? Last time I saw you I threw you against a wall.

**TALIA**

Yeah just a wall, that’s nothing.

**SAMAR**

Okay. Come sit him down. He’s barely standing.

**SHINJI**

Do you need anything?

**ELIO**

I’m alright. Thanks. Samar’s been taking care of me.

**SAMAR**

You still couldn’t walk yesterday...

**ELIO**

I didn’t know we’d get my goddess back, yesterday. So what’s the plan? I know, I know, I’m not coming. Just wanna be in the loop.

**SAMAR**

...We can’t do anything about Zylla for now, we have no proof, nothing-

**TALIA**

And also, not our problem honestly.

**SAMAR**

Yeah, the Kalsara is our priority.

**SHINJI**

The what?

**ELIO & SAMAR**

*(overlapping)*

The Kalsara - The crystal.

**ELIO**

Sorry. Go ahead.

**SAMAR**

We need a target.

**SHINJI**

I think... I might be able to help. *(A beat.)* I met a Warlock on friday night-

**TALIA**

At the club?

**ELIO**

Friday?

**SHINJI**

Yeah.

**ELIO**

I thought it was on Saturday... I only spent one night in the Vault?

**SAMAR**

Yeah.

**ELIO**

Goddess...

**TALIA**

Okay, you met a warlock...?

**SHINJI**

I didn’t know he was a warlock! Elio called and he said that you were fine and… I was about to leave when he started chatting me up.

**SAMAR**

And?

**SHINJI**

And- He left me his number.

**TALIA**

How did you figure out he was a Warlock?

**SHINJI**

He- he flew away, so...

**SAMAR**

You think you could get his address?

**SHINJI**

Yeah he sent me his address, he wanted to meet up.

**TALIA**

Wait… you gave him *your* number??

**ELIO**

They probably exchanged it before.

**SHINJI**

Yeah, yeah. *Before* I knew he was a warlock.

**TALIA**

Mkay...

**SAMAR**

So where is it?

**SHINJI**

I... I don’t know if I have the exact like numbers-

**ELIO**

You said he sent it.

**SHINJI**

Right- let me just get my phone.

**SAMAR**

It’s in your pocket.

**TALIA**

(*confused*)

Dude, what’s...? What’s up? What’s going on here?

*(A beat.)*

**SHINJI**

Look- It’s been a lot lately, I’m a bit-

**ELIO**

Where did you stay? On Friday?

**SHINJI**

I went to a hostel, why?

**ELIO**

On the phone you said you’d meet me back at Nova.

**TALIA**

... Oh you didn’t... You didn’t...

**SHINJI**

I thought it’d be safer. I mean… I don’t know, I changed my mind?

**TALIA**

No you DIDN’T!

**ELIO**

And you didn’t warn anybody?

**TALIA**

*(talking over)*

Shinji you did NOT fuck a warlock!

**SHINJI**

WHAT? NO?!

**ELIO**

What? No, no...

**SHINJI**

I didn’t- I didn’t! Guys- I didn’t fuck a warlock!

**SAMAR**

It’s okay if you did.

**ELIO**

How is it okay?

**TALIA**

No it’s not! What the fuck were you thinking!

**SAMAR**

Does he know what you are?

**SHINJI**

I didn’t! No! I gave him a fake name, everything-

**TALIA**

You are so lying! Look at your warlock-fucking face.

**ELIO**

Do you know how easy it is to NOT fuck an agent of the S.C.U?

**TALIA**

Seriously!

**ELIO**

Could you not have picked ANYBODY else in that club? Anybody?!

**SAMAR**

Well, he’s the only one of us who hasn’t been found out so maybe if we all fucked a warlock, we wouldn’t be in this situation.

*(A beat.)*

**ELIO**

... This is a fucking joke...

**SAMAR**

I’m just saying…

**TALIA**

...I can’t believe it... Like- Can you confirm? Can you just say it, I just wanna hear it.

**SHINJI**

...Define fucking.

**TALIA**

*DEFINE-?*

**SHINJI**

It’s not like it was with a goddamn crusader! Their job is to help people!

**ELIO**

Look at me! What they *did to me*!

**SAMAR**

I don’t- guys, I don’t… *give a shit*. I’m not gonna discuss the morality of fucking a warlock. But now, what we’re gonna do, because this is Shinji, is give him the benefit of the doubt. So we can get the address.

***SFX: rain stops***

**ELIO**

*(chuckle)*

I still can’t believe this happened.

**TALIA**

Shinji turned so pale.

**ELIO**

And then red. So, so red. I mean, damn... How long did you stay with Asher in the end?

**SHINJI**

The night. And most of the next day. But then I *did* go to thethe hostel. I mean again, I didn’t know what happened to you two! I was completely in the dark!

**ELIO**

Okay, sOkay, so then what happens? Cuz, I remember Cuz I remember Talia and I stayed behind, and yeah… Shinji, you and Samar went to Asher’s apartment.

**TALIA**

And what a place, she told us! You really know how to pick them.

**ELIO**

Oh, if you live on the ground floor, you know Ji-Ji’s not going home with you.

**TALIA**

He’s got standards.

**SHINJI**

Okay, okay, fuck off already.

**ELIO**

And if a man hasn’t committed war- crimes?

**TALIA**

Baby, he’s not committing either.

**SHINJI**

He’s literally the reason we’re still alive. So maybe some gratitude.

**ELIO**

Yeaaaah yeah.

**TALIA**

And he’s got great hair and a full set of teeth, we know.

**SHINJI**

So, Samar and I took off in the middle of the night, while we knew Asher was on shift.

**ELIO**

How did you get there again? I forgot.

**SHINJI**

Stole a car. Literally the first one we saw. Basim made a key for it.

**TALIA**

Love that genie.

**ELIO**

Love him.

***SFX: car key goes in, car door slams closed, engine starts***

**SAMAR**

...What?

**SHINJI**

What what?

**SAMAR**

You keep fidgeting, what is it?

**SHINJI**

... Why am I here?

**SAMAR**

Well, your mommy and daddy loved each other very much, and-

**SHINJI**

First of all, no they didn’t. And I meant why can’t you just- get there? Teleport.

**SAMAR**

Too far away, too many people. When I go, there’s no...distance. It’s like the world just become this… web... of energy. And people, their minds, are… lighthouses. You chose one and you anchor yourself to it. So it’s just safer to have someone you know with you.

**SHINJI**

...And if you chose someone one the other side of the world, could you just...?

**SAMAR**

Theoretically, yeah, completely. But that’s how most people die. Sensing the minds of everyone between you and your target, millions and billions... And that’s not even counting Gods, spirits,

SAMAR (CONT’D)

demons… You can’t. You lose yourself completely... So to survive, the trick is actually to limit your scope as much as possible.

**SHINJI**

Yeah might as well take a car.

**SAMAR**

Yep - Oh hey can you do something for me?

**SHINJI**

Mhm?

**SAMAR**

If you can find a tutorial or something, that explains what’s inside a microphone, and how it works, or something-

**SHINJI**

Why?

**SAMAR**

Because I’ve been asking Basim to make some, so we can bug Asher’s flat. But he keeps making… plastic shells. Empty inside. He doesn’t get it.

**SHINJI**

Oh. Yeah sure, gimme a sec.

**SAMAR**

*(In Arabic)*

Basim, come have a look! Come watch.

***SFX: Smoke and magic as Basim comes out***

**SHINJI**

Okay… yep, I think I found something.

***SFX: mist and steam, Basim becomes upset***

Uh... Samar?

*(Basim slaps and poke at Samar a couple times.)*

**SAMAR**

What- Ow-, aïe,- BASIM?! What? Oh- he doesn’t understand- Yeah, yeah, I’ll translate.

(*To Shinji*)

Can you not find one in arabic?

**SHINJI**

I don’t think so...

**ELIO**

In the meantime, as I said, Talia and I stayed in the hideout, which... was fine.

***SFX: Footsteps approach***

**TALIA**

What are you watching?

**ELIO**

That baking show. I don’t think they should have let Witches participate, honestly. It’s not fair for the others. Like, do a spin-off with witches only or something.

**TALIA**

Yeah- Hey, wanna play cards?

**ELIO**

I’d rather jump in a piranha tank-

**TALIA**

There’s no money this time!

**ELIO**

I’m not playing with a God of the Party… *again*!

**TALIA**

He’s too weak to do anythin-

**ELIO**

I don’t care! You’re just gonna win!

**TALIA**

So we’re just gonna sit there and-

**ELIO**

Yes, please. Please. (*A beat.*) How are you two by the way?

**TALIA**

Not great. Thinking of getting rid of him.

**ELIO**

Mhm...

**TALIA**

Sorry. Didn’t mean-

**ELIO**

No, no don’t worry... But, maybe now’s not the *best* time to try that.

**TALIA**

There’ll never be a *best* time. I don’t know *how* you do it.

**ELIO**

Well… she was never as bad as Samedi, but… I don’t know, I think if I tried to tell her no, you can’t use my blood, it wouldn’t have ended super well.

**TALIA**

Different boundaries.

**ELIO**

Yeah... I’m not saying you should give him a chance, not at all, but… I don’t think either of us knew what we were getting into. They weren’t made for us, but we chose them, still. I think it requires a different way of living.

**TALIA**

I don’t have to put up with it.

**ELIO**

No, you don’t.

(*A beat.*)

...If it was just about you I’d say let him go but… You could do so much *good* with his powers.

**TALIA**

You don’t know what you’re asking.

**ELIO**

It doesn’t matter what I ask, you do what you want. It sucks though, I’m sorry.

**TALIA**

Yeah. (*turns attention to the tv*) ... Oh what is this icing?

**ELIO**

Yeah, she’s fucked.

**SHINJI**

*We got into Asher’s flat without trouble. Samar tried to look into his home computer but obviously, password. I thought it’d be safer to leave it after that, but she said:*

**SAMAR**

I got it.

**SHINJI**

She composed a number on her burner phone, then brought it to her ear. It only rang once.

**SAMAR**

Hi sweetie, don’t worry about it, but I have a computer password in front of me, can you give me a guess?

**SHINJI**

(*whispering*)

Who is it?

**SAMAR**

(*whispering*)

Marcus.

**SHINJI**

Oh.

**SAMAR**

*(Over phone)*

Mhm. Spell that?...

***SFX: keyboard clacks***

Yep, we’re in! Thank you!

***SFX: phone hangs up with a click***

**SHINJI**

Seriously? Is that it?

**SAMAR**

Yep. Passwords, pins, lottery… How do you think he got money for the circus?

**SHINJI**

And how is he not a billionaire?

**SAMAR**

He has to save his powers most of the time. If he’s out of luck the next time the S.C.U comes knocking...

**SHINJI**

You can quantify luck?

**SAMAR**

Probably, but he’s bad at maths.

**SHINJI**

*In the end we didn’t find anything relevant, Asher had never even accessed his work email from this computer. Nothing. So we made sure we left everything in its place, and right before we left, Samar asked me:*

**SAMAR**

Hey, do you know what you’re doing? With this guy?

**SHINJI**

It was just one night.

...He’s not a killer.

**SAMAR**

That’s most people, Shinji. I know there are some things we can’t be for you. But… don’t lose yourself looking for them.

**SHINJI**

... Thank you.

**SAMAR**

What for?

**SHINJI**

Not… shouting, earlier. I don’t want them to… to think any less of me, y’know?

**SAMAR**

Talia got on stage to convince herself she’s in control. Elio went after her because he wanted to save everybody. You’re *all* idiots, but you care about each other. That hasn’t changed.

**SHINJI**

...Thanks...?

**SAMAR**

Anytime.

***SFX: Door closes***

**TALIA**

*The following week was just a lot of waiting, honestly.*

**ELIO**

*Samar kept us in shape and got me through rehabilitation, which was… a lot more meditating and less excercising than I thought. Because physically it was just three days. I didn’t lose anything. It was just my mind, muscle connection that was completely messed up.*

**TALIA**

*We had to re-apply Henna on me daily at that point, but it kept. My mind was all over the place so I wasn’t in the right state to try and talk it out with Samedi.*

**ELIO**

*We gathered, through the recordings, that Asher and his team were working on a new spell. The one they had exhumed from me was a pledge to Catrina. If they could somehow find the right words, alter it and infuse it with enough power, they could… bend a goddess’s will. The right spell, and she would protect whoever held her prison.*

**SHINJI**

*And on the 8th day, we finally got the tip we needed.*

***SFX: Door slides open***

**JOAN**

Thompson?

**ASHER**

Hey, I’m almost done with the new-

**JOAN**

It worked.

**ASHER**

... Are you serious?

**JOAN**

Come.

***SFX: Running up stairs, vault door opens, the ambience of various crystals fills the air, accompanied by ominous winds***

Step back a little.

***SFX: ominous winds continue, whispers seeping in between breezes***

*(Joan’s voice echoes)*

Obey, mother,

To the voice of another.

Widen your embrace,

Or remain in disgrace,

Obey, mother,

To the blood of a stranger.

***SFX: blood shield deploys***

*(Joan giggles)*

**ASHER**

I can’t believe it... Can it be replicated?

**JOAN**

I think the wording could be improved but it shouldn’t be an issue for most agents. And here’s the best part.

***SFX: crystal breaks***

It splits. If we grow that crystal, we could provide each agent with their own.

**ASHER**

Is it safe to feed a Kalsara like that?

**JOAN**

You’re S.C.U, Thompson-

**ASHER**

No, I know-

**JOAN**

If you couldn’t survive the Red Plague, you wouldn’t be here.

**ASHER**

I’m not worried about the infection. I’m not gonna eat it.

**JOAN**

I do it.

**ASHER**

You... infect yourself… with the Red Plague?

**JOAN**

And then kill the crystal from the inside, yes. It’s good training. If I can’t neutralize a mindless leach -

**ASHER**

...It’s not the crystal that I’m worried about… it’s the god inside.

**JOAN**

Her power will be divided amongst our agents, each opposing their own will to her. Draining *her*. Where’s the risk?

**ASHER**

...It’s gonna work isn’t it... It’s gonna work! How fast can it grow?

**JOAN**

Even with the blood and will of the entire ward it would take weeks. But if we bring it to the hanging stones, it might be a matter of hours. I’ve already sent my request to Queen Tempest, if she approves, we’ll be there next week.

***SFX: rain gently falls against window, click as recording stops***

**SHINJI**

...The crystal’s… alive?

**TALIA**

Sort of. They’re... loosely related to coral, apparently. And they’re the only creature known to feed off... Belief, Will, Consciousness- whatever it is, that… energy we produce, they use it to multiply. Grandmother had one.

**SHINJI**

Why?

**TALIA**

I mean, they’re basically batteries. Witches use them when they’re running low.

**ELIO**

*Samar tapped her necklace with a smile.*

**SAMAR**

Or if you want to bring a friend on the road.

**TALIA**

Yep. Samar feeds the crystal, and Basim feeds on it.

**SAMAR**

He’s not nearly strong enough to possess a body. I don’t think he’d even like that.

**TALIA**

But in theory, you *could* host him?

**SAMAR**

Nooo! You don’t put more than one spirit in the same body. The gods don’t share.

**ELIO**

...They said they were moving her.

**TALIA**

I heard hanging stones?

**ELIO**

Stonehenge. Millenia of rituals have made it extremely sensitive to magic. The air, the earth, you can almost feel them waiting, ready to obey. Witch’s powers have no match in this place. The ancestors knew.

**SHINJI**

So we have to intercept it.

**ELIO**

Yeah. Otherwise there’s no chance.

**SAMAR**

Or someone else will.

**TALIA**

...Zylla.

**SAMAR**

And the fate of the country is in our hands. This always fucking happens.

**ELIO**

So what do we do?

**SAMAR**

Oh I don’t know what we’ll do, but *you* stay put.

*(A beat.)*

**ELIO**

Samar, there’s nothing in this world that will make me stay put. You can shackle me, I’ll break through. You can drug me, knock me out, I’ll wake up, I swear it. No matter what you do I’ll answer when she calls. You know it.

**SAMAR**

Then prove it. Prove I won’t have to worry about you.

**ELIO**

How?

**SAMAR**

I wanted to wait a little longer but, if you insist… Every few years, urban legends and stupid teenagers bring a powerful demon back to life. And a couple days ago a flat party turned into a blood bath when someone said the wrong name three times.

**TALIA**

And what is the S.C.U doing?

**SAMAR**

It hasn’t made it back to them yet because the police thinks it’s a murder case.

**ELIO**

Does that mean *I’m* taking care of it?

**SAMAR**

We’re gonna barricade this house and leave you inside. Call its name, and kill it.

**ELIO**

And I can come?

**SAMAR**

And you can come.

**ELIO**

Deal.

***SFX: outro music***