

Maxwell's Daughter

Part Eight

'What the fuck do you mean he walked home?' Stephen Maxwell yelled, his eyes wide in terror.

'What? It's not far and I don't have the car.' Stephen crossed the room to the door and pulled on his trench coat. 'Where are you going? Stephen tell me.' Stephen stopped. He looked into her eyes and sighed.

'I promise I will tell you everything. But right now I need to find Robbie.' With that, Stephen hurried out of the house, grabbed his gun and ran for the clearing.

Something was not right, he knew that straight away. He could feel it. He reached the clearing and looked around. Robbie lay in the snow, covered in blood a few feet from the entrance to the room.

'No!' Stephen yelled out and ran to his side. He pulled up his coat and tore a large strip from his tee shirt that he held against the wound between Robbie's neck and shoulder. Stephen lifted him into his arms and hurried back to the house, the snow still falling around them and the night growing quickly dark.

'Andrea!' Stephen screamed, tears dripping from his face. 'Andrea call a fucking ambulance now!' She ran through from the hallway and her face dropped, she stood still in horror. 'Andrea the table!' She started and then cleared the table onto the floor with a long gesture and disappeared into the hallway. Stephen set Robbie down and pushed the cloth firmly to his neck.

'Andrea I need towels!' He yelled. Andrea re-appeared half a minute later with an armful of towels and the phone pressed to her ear.

'Yeah, I'm not sure he's bleeding a lot. Stephen what happened?' She cried.

'He was bitten by... an animal, a wolf maybe?'

'He was bitten, yeah. Please hurry.' Then turning to her husband. 'They won't be ten minutes.'

Stephen growled.

'We don't fucking have ten minutes.' He replaced the cloth, soaked with crimson with a clean white towel and held it. Robbie's eyes were rolling in his head and his breathing was quick, he let out soft moans every now and then.

'Listen to me son, everything's gonna be just fine. We're gonna get you better.'

There was shouting, crying and the occasional yell for a new towel and after four minutes Robbie's eyes closed and he fell into a state of unconsciousness. Another three minutes later there was a whirring and chopping of wind as the air-ambulance landed and two paramedics rushed to the house.

Andrea was nuzzled into Stephen's shoulder, her sobbing incessant. They watched through the glass door as a team of surgeons worked hurriedly on him. A Doctor Jenkins came out, peeling his latex gloves off before he reached them.

'How is he?' Andrea cut in before the Doctor could open his mouth. There was an ever so slight pause and he replied;

'He's stable but he's lost a lot of blood and whatever it was tore through an artery.' Andrea sobbed harder with a small gasp of breath. 'We're gonna keep him in theatre for a bit but you can go and see him when he comes around.' He nodded courteously and backed off.

Andrea sat by Robbie's side several hours later, holding his limp hand.

'Why hasn't he woken?' Andrea asked the ground. The Doctor exchanged looks with the nurse and walked over to the bedside.

'I'm afraid Robbie's become catatonic.'

'What does that mean, is he gonna make it?'

'It's hard to say at this point, there's a strong possibility that Robbie will slip into a coma.' Andrea sobbed into her hands and nuzzled into Robbie's chest.

'He's in good hands,' he said and left the room leaving the nurse at a desk in the corner. Stephen laid a hand on Andrea's shoulder.

'You should get some sleep.'

'I'm not leaving him.' Stephen thought for a second then took a step towards the nurse.

'Excuse me, is there anywhere my wife could sleep for the night? She's exhausted see...'

'Well there's always the on-call room at the end of the hall. I think it's free tonight.'

'Thank you.' He walked back to Andrea and took her in an embrace. 'See it'll be fine. The room's just at the end of the hall, you'll be right here. I'll get you straight away if anything happens.'

'Oh I don't know, she said, looking away.'

'Please, you need sleep, if he wakes up I'll be right here and I'll get you the second he does. You're no good to anyone like this.' She thought for a moment and nodded.

'Okay. You'll be right here by his side?'

'Of course.' Ten minutes after Andrea had left to get some sleep, Stephen Maxwell got to his feet, took a long breath and left the hospital.

Maxwell walked for just under three hours, his legs were heavy but nothing in comparison to the weight of the task hanging over him. He climbed the stairs to his study and lifted up the floorboard in the corner. He took out the small wooden box, inside a small shark tooth. Also under the floorboard were a pistol and a medium bag of white powder. He took the coke and made a line on the desk, snorting it with a rolled up note. He felt a warmth pass over him and his eyes close in ecstasy. He wiped his nose with his soaked sleeve and reached for the pistol. He reached up and put the shark tooth, on a string around his neck before sliding out the magazine and checking the ammo.

Stephen got to his feet, his finger resting on the cold metal trigger. He felt his neurons corrupt and his movements seemed controlled but distant. As if his mind was moving his feet from outside of his body. He was the puppet master of his own strings.

Snow fell around him. Light was seeping from the sky, scurrying for the horizon. The high-pitched squealing of the skies echoed around him as Stephen reached the clearing. He brought his arms up to his sides in a

crucifix and let his head fall back.

'Come on! Where the fuck are you? Come to me!' Complete silence. Stephen lifted up what remained of the trapdoor and descended the steps into the darkness. He flicked the light on to see no trace of life. He fell to his knees and pressed the gun to his temple. No. Not yet, it would be too easy to end it now. His body craved it, craved his final release.

Stephen got to his feet and stumbled back into the night. She stood before him, blood covering her front and dried around her mouth. She looked up at him with a blank expression; her clawed hands limp by her sides, scratching at her legs.

Then in the moonlight, Stephen saw a tear slip down her face and drip to the perfect white snow. She walked towards Stephen and without realizing it he had pulled her into a hug. Her useless hands around his neck, scratched gently on his back. Stephen took the gun and held it at the side of her head.

'Dad?' She said. Stephen pushed her back to look at her, his heart skipping a heartbeat. She looked into his eyes and she tried to speak again, her lips opening and then closing again.

'You.... Dad?' Her voice was croaky and small. Stephen felt a tear of his own fall down his face.

'Yeah, yeah that's right,' Stephen said half-faking a smile. He raised the gun to her head. 'I'm sorry.' He saw the sudden terror and pleading in her eyes as he pulled the trigger.

The crack of the gunshot echoed off the trees around him and her body fell sideways. Stephen caught the body in his arms and fell to the floor with her blood pouring over him. His heart roared and he buried his head in the remains of her shattered skull. He began to sob uncontrollably and he threw back his head to scream to the skies. He screamed and screamed until his stomach began to wrench and he spat black blood over himself and the lifeless lump in his arms. His whole body seemed to fill with the same blackness, thicker than blood. It grew hard in his veins like cement drying instantly and he grew cold suddenly. His eyes rolled back and his head fell limply onto the dead creature beneath him.

The heart rate monitor was putting out a steady beep in time with the rising and falling of the unconscious Robbie. The nurse moved her pen across the paperwork, looking up out of the window occasionally at the darkness. Suddenly the hear rate monitor dropped to a long sustained beep and the nurse wheeled round.

‘I need some help here!’ She yelled on her way to the bed. She felt his wrist and turned to Doctor Jenkins who had burst into the room.

‘There’s no pul’- Robbie’s eyes snapped open. He cricked his neck to the side, observing the nurse in a fraction of a second and pulled her towards him, sinking his teeth into her neck. The Doctor froze in place. He looked at Robbie with absolute terror; he had never seen anything like it, never seen eyes like those. Those sunken black eyes.