

*Reginae Consilium*

By

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28 Plays Later

Day 15

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ACT I

SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP: A CRYPT

ARCHES WITH STATUES OF LONG DEAD QUEENS AND PRINCESSES LINE THE WALLS AND CORRIDORS LEADING OFF. VAULTED CEILINGS WITH TINY STAINED GLASS WINDOWS LET IN A MAGICAL SPRAY OF COLORED LIGHT. SARCOPHAGI WITH "CARVED" WOMEN UPON THEIR LIDS FORM AN ANCIENT CUBE FARM THROUGH WHICH EMILY WANDERS.

SHE STOPS NEXT TO A SARCOPHAGUS THAT APPEARS NEWER THAN THE OTHERS. ITS STONE IS PALE, UNCOLORED BY TIME AND SMOKE FROM THE TORCHES AND CANDLES THAT FLICKER IN NICHEs ON THE WALLS.

EMILY: I miss you, mother. I wish I could talk to you one last time. A supper. I need your counsel more than anything right now.

DESIREE: She can't hear you yet, child.

EMILY LOOKS UP, STARTLED.

EMILY: Who's there? No one may enter the *Reginae Consilium* save the Queen!

DESIREE SITS UP FROM HER REPOSE ON ONE OF THE SARCOPHAGI AND SWINGS HER FEET OVER THE EDGE.

DESIREE: No one has, child. Technically speaking.

EMILY DROPS TO ONE KNEE AND BOWS HER HEAD.

EMILY: Grandmother. Your highness.

ROBERTA: Oh stand up. You're the 'Your highness' now.

ROBERTA, TOO, SITS UP, STANDS, THEN MOVES  
TO SIT NEXT TO DESIREE.

EMILY: What? Who...

ROBERTA: Her Eminence Roberta The Wise, Queen of the land for  
nigh on sixty years... about three hundred years ago.  
Thank god they carved me as I was in my youth.

CARLA: I wasn't so lucky.

CARLA APPEARS FROM AN ARCH, STEPPING  
GINGERLY DOWN FROM HER PERCH TO JOIN THE  
OTHERS. SHE IS WITHERED, BUT MOVES QUICKLY.

EMILY: I don't understand.

DESIREE: What do you think *Reginae Consilium* means?

EMILY: The Queen's Counsel, of course. All of the Queens who  
have come before.

CARLA: (Indicating the others) Duh.

AS CARLA WAVES, THE OTHER SCULPTURES ATOP  
THE SARCOPHAGI, ALL SAVE THE NEWEST, RISE  
AND SIT, SOME MOVING TO SIT TOGETHER, SOME  
STAYING STILL. THE STATUES IN NOOKS STEP  
DOWN AND JOIN THE OTHERS.

EMILY: But that's just a... polite... term... for...

ROBERTA: All your dead ancestors in one place to help you?

VERONICA: Except Alberta.

ALL THE WOMEN TURN TO LOOK AT A PORTRAIT  
HANGING ON THE WALL.

CARLA: Oh, right, Alberta. Damn volcano.

PHOEBE: Carla! Language.

CARLA: Sorry, mother.

EMILY: Wait. So... you're all here? All the time? And have been for hundreds--

FREYA: Thousands!

EMILY: THOUSANDS of years?!??

CARLA: Yup.

DESIREE: That's how it works, darling.

EMILY: (Indicating the newest sarcophagus) But where's mother?

ROBERTA: It takes a little time.

DESIREE: And maybe more than a little adjustment, especially for her. But she'll be here eventually. I promise.

EMILY: (leaning on the tomb nearest) This is a bit overwhelming.

DESIREE: I knew she wouldn't tell you.

PATRICIA: She was stubborn.

EMILY: What do you mean?

DESIREE: She never believed. I brought her down here as a small child. Too small, I guess. It scared her so much she never came down again.

EMILY: Never?!

ROBERTA: Not once. It's been quiet for a very long time.

CARLA: Caitlin snores sometimes.

CAITLIN: (from the back) I do not!

CARLA: I love torturing her.

PHOEBE: Carla!

CARLA: (whispering) Eternal torture... (she giggles)

PHOEBE: Carla!!

CARLA: Her hearing is much better now than when she was alive.

PHOEBE: CARRRRRLAAAA!!

CARLA SIGHS.

DESIREE: So how can we help you, dear? What counsel can we provide?

EMILY: I... well now I feel silly. I... I was sad.

DESIREE: Oh. Okay...

EMILY: I mean... mother has been gone almost a month. Everything is running smoothly. The advisors she put in place are wise. Our economy is strong. Our neighbors are generous and helpful.

CARLA: So you missed your mommy?

ROBERTA: Don't pick on her.

CARLA: No, that's totally legitimate. Phoebe! How many times did I come down here just to tell you how much I missed you?

PHOEBE: Not enough.

CARLA: Also legitimate.

DESIREE: Emily, the reason we have lasted so long as a kingdom, as a dynasty, and as a family is because we are here for each other. We have each other's best interest at heart now, and forever. We are shepherds to our people, and we serve them above all others. We are here for you in good times, and in bad. So even if

you're just feeling a little lonely, and you will,  
because the crown is a heavy, heavy thing, we are here  
for you.

EMILY: I am humbled.

ROBERTA: Your job is not an easy one. We all know that.

DESIREE: You are loved. And you are always welcome here.

CARLA: Now go make us some new great-granddaughters!

PHOEBE: Carla!

CARLA LETS OUT AN EXASPERATED SIGH.

CARLA: Everyone was thinking it.

FADE TO BLACK.